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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



BERTIE SAW A MAN LYING UPON HIS LEFT SIDE ACROSS THE ROOTS OF AN OLD BEECH.

WAS SHE TO BLAME?

[A NOVELETTE.]

(Continued.)

CHAPTER IV.

A SUNNY day in June, and Bertie walked through the wood, which formed no inconsiderable portion of the Lomax estate. She was free to come and go as she chose, and as very few people passed that way, she frequently spent whole hours there. Being tired at last with her wanderings she sat down, and opening the book she carried began to read a part of the famous speech with which Vivien sought to beguile the wizard Merlin:—

"My name, once thine, now thine, is smaller mine,
For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were thine,
And shame, could shame be thine, that shame were mine.
So trust me not at all, or all in all."

Then the sound of a sharp report, followed by a hoarse cry, frightened her, and she started to her feet trembling, and not knowing which way to turn. The wood was lonely; if she should chance to meet anyone who would harm her, and shriek for help, no one would hear her. The report itself had not alarmed her, but the awful cry that followed had driven the blood from her face back to her heart, and she could scarcely breathe in the fear of those early moments. Naturally, however, she was not cowardly; and in a little while, when there came no repetition of the hoarse shriek, other thoughts came to her. There might have been an accident, and the victim of it, if alone and unable to move, might stay in the wood all day before succour came.

She started forward, scolding herself for her timidity, and went in the direction from which she thought the sound had come; and reaching at last the spot where the undergrowth had recently been cleared away, saw a man lying upon his left side, and fallen across the gnarled

roots of an old beech. Again she paused, fearing there had been foul play, and wondering what mercy she herself would meet if he who had done the deed hovered near. All was very still; there was no sound save the rustling of the trees and buzzing of flies, so she went forward with beating heart, and knelt beside the stranger.

He was lying in a pool of blood, which seemed to flow from his left side. In an agony of horror she bent her ear to his mouth, and heard his faintly drawn breath. Thank Heaven! he was not dead—but what was she to do! She did not like to leave him, and she must not rely upon chance assistance; for aught she knew he might in the meanwhile bleed to death. She fancied he was an artist, partly because he wore a brown-velveteen coat, and his wavy fair hair was longer than is usual with more ordinary mortals.

She spoke to him, but he made no answer; she raised her voice and cried for help, but only the echoes mocked her; she looked round and

could see no sign of a scuffle; the grass about her was not trodden down, and there were no marks of violence upon the stranger's face or hands—the latter were very white, the fingers long and delicately shaped as a woman's.

Was it possible his wound was self-inflicted, and, if so, where was the weapon with which it had been done? There was none to be seen, and with all her former suspicions revived she bent lower and lifted his head; she took off her light mantle and laid it beneath the pretty yellow hair gently, and as if afraid to hurt him further; then springing to her feet, ran as quickly as the brambles would allow her in the direction of the road.

Fortunately, just beyond the confines of the wood, she met Hirst and Mr. Lanark, who looked surprised at the haste she made, and perhaps a little scandalised until they saw the blood on her white dress.

"Good heavens! What has happened, Bertie?" "A man has been shot in the wood," she panted, "a stranger, and I'm afraid he's dying fast. Do, do come with me; and you, Mr. Lanark, run for Doctor Musgrave."

She was so breathless, so giddy, that Hirst would have spared her any further exertion, but this she would not hear of.

"No, you would waste time in finding him. I will go back with you; a woman is always useful at such times as these—come."

Mr. Lanark had already started for Doctor Musgrave, and Hirst turned with Bertie; she hurried along, forgetful of fatigue, heedless of the brambles that tore her dainty dress, oblivious even of Hirst—and so she brought him to the spot where the stranger lay.

Hirst partly lifted him so that his head rested on his shoulder, then, as the stranger's left arm fell helpless, he said,—

"It is broken—and good Heavens! he is wounded in the side—there has been terrible foul play."

Bertie knelt down.

"Can't we staunch the bleeding, Hirst?" and even in that moment he was struck with the extreme womanliness of her beauty. They utilised their handkerchiefs, but these were soon saturated, and then the girl began to tear the dainty trimmings from her dress with ruthless, eager hands. It seemed to her Musgrave would never come, so she started up and went once more to the confines of the wood, and to her joy she found him hurrying up the road. She caught his arm as he drew near,—

"Hurry! hurry!" she said. "There is no time to lose! Where is Mr. Lanark—we shall want help!"

"He has gone round for my carriage and all needful things. He found me, fortunately, a short way down the road. I was indulging in a constitutional."

Doctor Musgrave was short and, like Hamlet, scant of breath, and he could scarcely keep pace with the swift-footed girl, who glimmered through the bushes, a fleet, white figure, but he was of the true old British metal, and would not be beaten, so they arrived together at the beech.

He looked very grave as he knelt over his patient, and said,—

"The hemorrhage must be stopped. I am afraid the ball is lodged in his side, but I cannot make a full examination here—we shall have to cut away his clothes. Poor fellow! poor fellow! is there nothing about him to tell who he is?"

He began gently to search the pockets of the coat, but found nothing until he reached the last, when he produced a small, beautifully-mounted revolver.

"This relieves my mind of a great weight," he said. "There has been no foul play, only a terrible accident. I should say the poor fellow stumbled over the roots of this confounded tree, and falling on his side, struck the trigger, and so met what seems likely to be his death. Why will the young fools carry such dangerous toys! For Heaven's sake, don't touch it, Miss Vandeleur, the barrels may not be empty."

He was interrupted by Hirst's exclamation,— "Thank Heaven, they have come at last."

Mr. Lanark and a villager appeared with a

rude litter hastily constructed, upon which the unfortunate man was placed, and the four men bore him through the wood to the carriage, the doctor having done all he could for the present.

"The question is where shall we take him?" Doctor Musgrave panted; "It must be to a place where he can have proper attention—the nearer the place the better for him."

"He would be properly cared for at the Robinettes," Bertie said pitifully; "take him there, Doctor."

"No," remonstrated Hirst. "The affair happened on my land, I look on myself as his host; the Lodge is the nearest place from here, and Mrs. Silver was a hospital nurse before she married."

"Capital! capital!" from the Doctor, "couldn't be better; and now that this amiable dispute is ended, we will take him there with as much haste as we dare; the sooner he is rid of his clothes the better. Perhaps, Miss Vandeleur, you will crown your goodness by hurrying forward to prepare Mrs. Silver. As for you, Lomax, you had better get in with me; after we have settled this poor fellow comfortably I'll drive you to the Hall. Good-bye, Miss Vandeleur," as she moved away to do his bidding; "you're a brave and a clever girl."

"I think I can dispense with the cleverness," she said, with a sad little smile Hirst did not understand; "most of my friends object to the quality." Then she hurried on, with Mr. Lanark by her side. That gentleman regarded her with honest admiration that, had she chosen, she might quickly have fanned into love.

"Miss Vandeleur," he said frankly; "I've often been unjust to you, accused you in my own mind of callousness, and I want your forgiveness for the unintentional wrong I did you." He paused, and the girl said gravely,—

"In an ordinary mood I should laugh at you, but I can't do it now. I am honestly glad to have your esteem; you are an honourable man, and one may be proud to call you friend."

"Do you know," he said, with some hesitancy, "you have never seemed so beautiful as you do now in your torn dress, with ruffled hair and gloveless hands! You are an angel of mercy." She smiled then.

"Have you ever seen an angel in a torn dress, with gloveless hands and a most disordered bang!"

He did not laugh in reply; he was just then far too much in earnest.

"You call Scott's words to my mind forcibly,—

"O woman, in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please."

But she stopped him with a gesture.

"Please no, Mr. Lanark, that verse is so fearfully hackneyed;" then she went into Mrs. Silver, and he waited to escort her home. She did not keep him long, and they walked together to the Robinettes to find both Mr. and Mrs. Vandeleur out. The excitement of the morning was beginning to tell on Bertie, and she sank wearily into a chair, and was very glad to take the wine Mr. Lanark had poured out for her. He did not hurry away, and Bertie's parents, coming in as he was making his adieu, urged him to lunch with them. He did not require much persuasion.

Nothing was found upon the stranger to tell his name, and all that could be done was to nurse him back to health if possible. Doctor Musgrave cleverly extracted the ball from the side, and set the broken arm, then left him to the care of motherly Mrs. Silver. By night he was in a state of high fever, quite delirious and raving of some wrong, or fancied wrong, that had been done him. His nurse sent to the good doctor for a sleeping draught, knowing that, in his state, violence of movement and wakefulness would possibly prove fatal.

Many days he lay delirious, unconscious of the gifts showered upon him from the Hall and the Robinettes; unconscious of the daily visits and anxious inquiries of pretty Miss Vandeleur, who looked upon him as very much her own property,

because, but for her, he might have bled to death in the wood.

Miss Priscilla called once or twice, but Mrs. Silver would not admit her to the invalid.

"No," she said. "Doctor Musgrave says the fewer that enter the room the better; I would not allow even Miss Bertie to go up." And the frail maiden lady was compelled to accept the refusal with what grace she could.

But Miss Priscilla's heart was good; if her tongue was sharp, and she sent down a case of wine "to keep up Mrs. Silver's strength while nursing, and to mark her approval of her conscientious conduct!"

For three weeks the stranger hovered upon the brink of the dark stream; for three weeks he raved of or lamented for his "bonnie," imploring her to return to him; then he would mourn that his life was broken and spoiled, so incomplete without her—if she would come to him, all should be forgotten and forgiven; and his good nurse listening, would wipe away the tears that rose to her honest eyes.

"Poor boy!" she said; "there's a dark story hidden behind his fair face."

About that time Miss Priscilla was seized by a violent desire to see a third cousin living as a small town in Suffolk, and of course Margaret was to accompany her. Hirst protested loudly against such an arrangement, but his aunt stood firm, saying, with a smile, that separation would teach them to value each other the more, quoting the hackneyed (and in most cases), the false sentiment that, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder!" The girl, who added the words, "Yes, of somebody else," had a perfect knowledge of the mind and heart mason-line.

So the ladies went to Clare—surely the sleepiest, dreariest of market towns; scarcely larger than a village, boasting few shops, and knowing no life save on Monday, when farmers and corn merchants gathered in the small Corn Exchange, or chatted in the market place.

Margaret looked about her with a sort of dread, recalling the dreary days of her own past and wondering if here she should sink back into the old bitterness, the old repining. She was far from being cowardly, but that night she dreaded going to her room because she would be alone; and Miss Norden, her hostess, had agreeably occupied the after-dinner hours with legends and ghost stories enough to frighten anyone possessing the hardest nerves.

She had told how, in the room where Miss Priscilla was to sleep, and which overlooked the keep of a ruined castle, a woman had sunk down and died, and how the devil himself had appeared to carry her off. She had led a cruel, wicked life; and, when her last illness came upon her, thought to stave off death by going about in her ordinary fashion, rustling through the long corridors, where low whispers were prolonged in loud echoes, until the last pang seized her, and she had crept into the room and died like a dog in a corner.

That was a cheerful story; but Miss Priscilla was above credulity, and took her candle and stalked off in fearless majesty.

Not so Margaret. She entered her chamber with a thrill of horror, and felt inclined to beg the maid who waited upon her to remain the night with her. Had not Miss Norden told her this room, too, was haunted!—that from its one window a man, driven mad by serious trouble, had looked out, and looking out, cut his throat, so that the blood dripped on the pebbles and pavement below—that ever since his spirit was apt to reappear!

Margaret looked round fearfully; then, candle in hand, peered under the bed, searched the wardrobe, and, at last being ready for bed, put the light on a bracket beside her, and, despite her dread, succeeded at last in getting to sleep.

When she woke the sun was well up, and she laughed at the folly of last night. She was not an acutely sensitive woman, so when she opened her window and leaned out she did not imagine (as Bertie would have done) that she saw the suicide's blood yet staining the stones; she saw only the pretty upper garden, the stone steps leading to the lower, which was still prettier,



and beyond that rose the hill on which stood the Keep.

There was a long line of level mound (it could not be called a hill) where once the ladies of an ancient race had walked, but a road had been cut through it, and the Great Eastern Company had come to spoil it with their lines and sheds, their machinery and hideous carriages, which resembled nothing so much as meeting-houses, with benches placed in all directions.

The view from the window was very good although it did include the next garden, where the chemist's children, unwashed and uncumbed, already disported themselves.

Having finished her toilet, Margaret prepared to go out. The house was very quiet, and she saw no one about until she reached the drawing-room, which one of Miss Norden's two maids was dusting. She went in and asked in which direction she should go for the Keep; and, looking out, saw the post-office, which was kept by a shoemaker, the desolate market-place, and a fishmonger just opening his shop.

The maid paused in her dusting.

"There isn't any need to go into the street, miss; I can let you out at the back," and she ran downstairs, followed by Margaret.

They went through the upper and lower gardens, and came to a black gate, which the girl unlocked, and Margaret found herself at the very foot of the hill.

"This is the steepest side, miss; but perhaps you don't mind climbing."

The young lady smiled to herself as she passed through the midst of *débris*, fragments of broken meat and bread, remains of damaged crockery, thrown over the wall by the careless and wasteful maids. Then she made her way up the steep incline, through bushes and shrubs, and was rewarded by a sight of all the country round.

She sat down on a wooden bench, and the chiming of Cavendish bells came clearly across the country to her. It was said a subterranean passage ran from the keep to Cavendish Church, and the whole country teemed with stories of dark deeds done in passing through it.

The ruin itself disappointed her; it was small, and there was no way of entrance. After an exhaustive scrutiny she sat down, and presently she heard a voice that sounded far away calling her name. She looked into Miss Norden's garden, and saw Miss Priscilla beckoning her, so she made an hasty descent, and went into breakfast.

There was a letter from Hirst beside her plate, he having written her before he could possibly hear from her, and it was full of loving reminders of her promise to write often, and the whole tone of it expressing the devotion he felt for his "rare pale Margaret."

The morning was spent in walking, and making a few calls, wandering down by the little stream that did duty for a river, skirting the Priory grounds (which, of course, were haunted too), and visiting the large, handsome church.

This day was a facsimile of all the others, and Miss Ashwin wrote her lover and Bertie that she was heartily tired of the place and its stupid natives, but she regretted to say Miss Priscilla was quite in her element, and would frequently insist upon walking to Stoke and back, a journey of ten miles, with only an hour's rest between coming and going.

"There is nothing to see here," she continued, "and the people are dreadfully clownish. They pause with open mouths and distended eyes to stare at us as we pass, and make audible remarks on my dress and personal appearance. One red-headed wretch said, loudly,—

"She ain't a bad-looking wench; but, lord, she ain't got a morsel of colour in her cheeks; she's as white as Miller Dalston's old hat. Don't you begin to doubt the nicety of your taste, Hirst?"

Her lover's letters were interesting; he was that rare thing among men, a good correspondent, and seemed to know by intuition just what would please best, and what she would most like to hear. There was frequent mention

of the "handsome stranger," and one day he wrote:—

"Our friend has recovered consciousness, but is still fearfully weak, and Musgrave won't allow him to talk. I wanted to ask him his name that I might write to his friends, who necessarily are anxious as to his long silence, but the doctor—you know his way—said, 'let him alone a few days; he'll tell you soon enough, and my belief is that he hasn't any friends.' I gathered my suspicions from his ravings. You know we found nothing upon him but a small bag of money and the revolver that did all the mischief."

Later Hirst wrote again, telling her that the stranger had told him who he was, and how he chanced to be in the wood. He had stayed at Yelverton the night before the accident, and intending to start for Yarmouth in the morning, had his portmanteau conveyed to the station.

Entering into conversation with an official, he heard much of the beauty of Lomax Hall, and walked down to ascertain if it was worth while to lengthen his stay in the county in order to make a drawing of it. And the accident happened in this way; he had spent two or three months in Ireland, and owing to the disturbed state of the country had accustomed himself to carry firearms; on this particular morning but two barrels were loaded, and he, walking heedlessly, fell over the roots of the beech upon his left side, and both barrels were discharged.

When Margaret answered this letter, she said,—

"You have whetted my curiosity; you leave me still in ignorance of the artist's name; tell me in your next."

But whether from forgetfulness or mischief Hirst did not gratify her curiosity, and she returned to the Hall in a state of ignorance.

Her lover met her, and Miss Priscilla smiled to see he had no thought for any but Margaret.

"They will be very happy," she thought, and watched them with an affectionate regard that softened all her rugged features.

Bertie was with Mrs. Lomax, and Margaret insisted upon carrying her off to her own room for a "good chat." She really was attached to the young heiress, who certainly had never done anything to attract or retain her kindly regard.

"I am so glad to be back again," Miss Ashwin said, reclining comfortably in her chair. "The life at Clare was so dead and alive, and the house so ghostly, I was positively afraid of my own shadow in the dark corridors; and, being old, the place was full of strange sounds; the brogue of the peasants and lower middle-class, too, is beyond description. Miss Priscilla had a speaking acquaintance with them all, and their greetings were unique. Imagine being accosted thus: 'Marnin' mum, hoo be yo' t' marnin'!' And one woman will call to her friend across the road as they go to do their shopping, 'marnin', t' yo' what be gooin' t' marnin'!'"

Bertie laughed.

"Oh, that is good English compared with the Somerset dialect, which is vile in the extreme."

"Tell me about this interesting stranger. Hirst thinks he will make a great impression on me, and so refuses to describe him, will not even tell me his name, which he says is truly appropriate to his appearance and manners. He has promised to bring him here for the purpose of an introduction, but I don't want to be overwhelmed by his splendour, so in pity ask you to prepare his way."

But Bertie only laughed.

"What! play traitor in the camp? Not I. This is the only thing I will tell you; he has had a great sorrow, not that he ever talks of it, or refers in the slightest to the past; but a woman's eyes are keen where a man is concerned, and I am not to be deceived. I believe he hated to recover, and now, though he can get about, he is so pale, so listless."

"That is natural, considering the dangerous nature of his wound. Do you know, Bertie, I am

remembering a passage in one of Wendell Holmes's books, where he says a young man has only to be lonely and spak of his loneliness pathetically, to win a girl's pity, and that usually leads to love. Is it so with you, my dear!" leaning forward.

Miss Vandeleur started up, her dark eyes blazing, her cheeks crimson.

"You're as big a fool as the rest of them!" she said, savagely, and left the room more noisily than usual, slamming the door behind her.

Margaret looked not a little surprised, but the surprise soon faded from her beautiful face, and she stood at the window musing.

"I wonder," she thought, "why I should trouble my peace about this artist! Is there no other artist in the world that it must be he! Perhaps it is, because Hirst described him as fair, and said he had travelled in Ireland. The other was killed in the Ballygan riot two months ago; I saw the announcement with my own eyes. How foolish I am!" and she sighed, whilst she added under her breath, "Poor fellow! poor fellow!" then began to dress for dinner.

She looked very handsome in her dress of black and silver, a present from Miss Priscilla; her eyes were soft and dewy, her manner, as usual, the very embodiment of gentleness. Well might Hirst be proud of her, as he watched her graceful movements, and listened to the low tones of that lovely, wooing voice.

"Margaret!" he whispered, "in five months you will be my very own. I wish with all my heart the five months were gone," looking passionately into her pale, beautiful face; "my love, my love, how happy we will be!"

"Yes!" gently laying one hand upon his shoulder, "sometimes I feel a little sorry, Hirst, that you love me so well; such love as yours is unlucky, because of its intensity. There was a man once who loved a woman as you love me, and she was very cruel to him, being indifferent to his passion;" she paused, and the young man said with a downcast face,—

"That woman was yourself. I wish you had not told me; I liked to believe no other man had ever claimed your thoughts—why did you tell me, dear!"

"I don't know why I did it, and it was foolish; but you have no need for jealousy," quietly; "take me into dinner now," and they followed in Bertie's wake; that young lady had not quite recovered her serenity, nor did she the whole of the evening, and when taking her leave she said, addressing Margaret, but speaking audibly,—

"I am going down to the 'lonely young man' in the morning to escort him here; he really cannot do without the support of my arm yet. Is it quite the correct thing, or will you play properly?" and with a little malicious smile she bowed herself from the room.

The morning was cool and fresh, but there was a promise of great heat as the day wore on, so Bertie started early for Lomax Lodge. She found her *protégé* reading that most unhealthy book "The Cityards of Clyffe," and with her usual imperative air that set so prettily upon her, said,—

"Put that aside and come with me. I'm going to take you to the Hall. Miss Ashwin is eager to see and know you, having heard most wonderful accounts of you."

The face lifted to hers was pale and high-bred, with dark brown eyes that looked too large for it in its present wanness, and the hair that waved about the broad temples was pale gold; his voice was mellow, but weary as he said,—

"Miss Ashwin! the name touches some chord in my memory—where have I heard it? It must have been mentioned casually or I should not have forgotten—Ashwin! Ashwin!" meditatively, but Bertie broke in ruthlessly,—

"Never mind about that now, Mr. Grant; if you waste time in trying to solve the riddle the day will be too hot for walking."

With a smile at her impatience he rose and they went out together, he leaning on her arm, because as yet he was very weak. They went slowly, the girl managing to screen herself and

companion from the sun with her large cream parasol.

He was very quiet, more so than usual, and Bertie respected his silence. Now and again she glanced at the fair, pale face which was not only handsome but good, and wondered what sad story it hid, and pitied him with all her heart.

She treated him with an almost maternal tenderness that was very touching; and Mr. Vandeleur, who had taken a sincere liking to the young man, would have been glad to see their friendship ripen into a warmer feeling.

The girl broke the long silence by saying,—
"Now I wonder of what you are thinking—you look so preternaturally grave!"

He sighed a little.

"My thoughts had gone back to another day as fair as this. I was a poor man then with no influence, and with no known relatives. I could not sell my pictures, and I was on the verge of starvation; and when everything looked so black—it could not well be blacker—the worst blow of all came, and almost deprived me of my reason. Then my luck took a turn—a far-off cousin died and left me all he had. New friends replaced the old, and there was a rage for my pictures, which alone would have made me a proud and happy man, but for that dreadful day a year ago. Oh, heavens! only a year ago!"

The low but passionate anguish in his voice stirred his companion to keener commiseration, but she did not speak. This was the first time in all their intercourse he had ever lifted the veil from his dead past, and perhaps it would be well not to interrupt his flow of words, because in confession there is relief.

But he stopped as suddenly as he had begun; and Bertie, seeing he had said more than he had intended, and would be glad to forget it, and thankful if she would do the same, began to talk of Margaret.

"You will see Hirst's fiancée—surely the loveliest woman you could imagine, with a face like a poet's dream, and a figure that would send a sculptor into the seventh heaven with delight; and those who know her best say she is as good as she is beautiful. That may be so, but I sometimes doubt it, and quite without a cause. I am not unprejudiced; the fact is I am a wee bit jealous of the 'rare pale Margaret.'"

She felt her companion start.

"Why is it everything to-day recalls my past! What induced you to make that quotation?" he asked, in a strange, dull voice; "was it accident?"

"No! it is Hirst's favourite term for his lady-love, and he has some of the Laureate's words set to music; he used often to sing them to Miss Ashwin, but she objected to them for some unknown reason or whim."

"Now I know where I heard that name—'Margaret'; that has recalled it all to me," dreamily, yet painfully.

"Do you know Margaret Ashwin?" Bertie asked eagerly, but was disappointed by his reply,—

"No! but I heard her spoken of by a mutual friend," his face quivering with some suppressed emotion, and then as they drew near the Hall, conversation altogether ceased.

They found Mrs. and Priscilla Lomax in the breakfast-room, and the two women, so distinctly different in all but their good hearts, made much of this forlorn stranger, insisting that he should remain to luncheon, by which time Hirst and Margaret would return from their walk.

It was very grateful to the lonely man to be made much of by these refined and delicate women. He thought it would be cruelly hard to go away to his dreary lodgings, where no welcoming word ever greeted his return, and he was horribly tired of roaming from place to place on a vain and hopeless search. Perhaps Mrs. Lomax read something of this in his face, for she said,—

"Now that you can dispense with Mrs. Silver's care without danger to yourself, we shall be glad if you will spend a few days with us. You shall have perfect liberty of action; shall go and come when and how you please, and when our efforts fail to amuse you Bertie will allow you to call upon her," smiling almost wistfully at the girl she so coveted for her own.

Hartley Grant's pale face flushed with gratitude.

"I should be very glad to come if it would not inconvenience you," and as he spoke Hirst's manly voice sounded in the hall, and another answered him laughingly—another of such peculiarly pure clear quality that it surely could belong to but one woman.

Hartley started up, trembling like a child, a strange light in his eyes. The door was opened, and Margaret entered, smiling and beautiful, gave one comprehensive glance round, saw that eager, tremulous figure, those reproachful, despairing eyes, and then fell back against the wall, her hands hanging slackly by her skirts, her face ashen.

"Margaret! My Margaret!" and then the man sank back into his chair again, and with one hand covered his eyes.

There was an utter silence for the space of a moment, and then Hirst asked, hoarsely,—

"What does this mean?" and Margaret could not answer, could not lift her hands to hide her awful pallor.

Miss Priscilla stamped her foot angrily.

"Are you both dumb?" Can't you speak! What is Margaret Ashwin to you Hartley Grant!"

He lifted his head and looked up in a dazed way.

"What?" he said; "only my wife!" and laughed.

"It is false!" Hirst shouted, and sprang at him, but Bertie rushed between.

"Hirst, you forget yourself. He has suffered some wrong; it may have turned his brain. He is weak, and you are strong."

He turned from her to the silent, stony figure showing dark against the wall.

"Margaret, what have you to say!"

"I—thought—he—was—dead," she said, with stiff lips, and at the sound of her voice Hartley roused a little from his stupor.

"How long!" he asked. "How long is it since you thought me dead? Was it before you engaged yourself to him? For Heaven's sake tell me. I would rather think you could forget me quickly, than—than know you—for—Oh, Heaven! I can't say the word to you!"

"She was engaged to my son on the twenty-first of last March," Mrs. Lomax said, speaking for the first time.

Hartley shrank back.

"It is only two months since I was reported dead! Oh, Heaven! this is worse, far worse than your desertion! Margaret! Margaret!"

Hirst seized her by the arm.

"Was he cruel to you that you deserted him? By Heaven! you shall answer me," and his fingers grasped the fair flesh cruelly, so that she would bear the marks of them for many a day.

"Answer me, woman!"

But the beautiful wretched creature had no word to say, and when Hirst asked again,—

"What tempted you to this deceit! Did he beat you? Was he brutal to you in any way! Oh, offer some excuse."

She said slowly,—

"He was not cruel."

Then Hirst fell back from her, and saw as in a dream Bertie's wonderful eyes tear-filled bent upon him.

Hartley had risen again, and now he seemed not to see or heed the presence of others. His voice was very slow and laboured, and gradually he drew near to his wife, but did not attempt to touch her.

"Was my poverty so hard to bear it changed your love to hate! Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! if you had been but patient, had borne it a little longer! Was I tedious to you in those days? did I weary you with my love and my dreams of greatness? Ah! you poor soul!"—not contemptuously, but with a sort of divine compassion—"when I found you had gone I got up and followed you, day after day, week in and week out, for I said surely when she misses my love she will turn to me. I went to your home. You were not there, and I was driven away for a tramp. Sometimes I got a clue, but I always lost it, and only love and pity for you bore me up. Oh, wife! wife! what a wretched return

you have made me! Then wealth came to me, then friends, and lastly fame; but these could not content me. I had no home, I was a wanderer for your sake"—he paused because the women sobbed uncontrollably, all save Margaret, and in a dull way he wondered why they should weep when she shed no tear—"then I heard you had gone to Ireland, so I followed, but you were not there; but I never dreamed of this—oh! Heaven! I never dreamed of this! I thought you changed, but not—"

He paused again, unable to say more, and Miss Priscilla started up, crying, as she pointed to the door,—

"Go, go, devil, you have done harm enough."

Margaret essayed to move, but could not, and Hirst never lifted his drooped head, so Hartley spoke again,—

"If not for her sake for mine give her a shelter for this day. To-morrow—to-morrow I shall have thought what to do. Give us your word, Margaret, to stay if they will let you."

And she said hoarsely,—

"I will stay."

He moved a little nearer yet.

"Was I so foolish your soul shrank from me," and unconsciously broke into the words of Browning's wonderful poem:—

"Would it were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are all;
I never the worst for a touch or two
On my speckled hide, not you the pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first flock's fall
On her wonder of white, must swan undid!"

CHAPTER V.

MARGARET was alone in her room, locked in by Miss Priscilla; she had said,—

"There is no occasion to lock me in, I shall not attempt to go; but give me paper and ink and pens that I may write my story. It is so hard to tell, and when you have read it you will pity me more than condemn."

Miss Priscilla sniffed scornfully, then suddenly turned upon the girl, fiercely,—

"Margaret Ashwin—Margaret Grant, or whatever your name may be! Heaven reward you for what you have done! How many men's lives have you spoiled! how many, you wretched woman! How many live to curse the day they met your calm beauty? Oh! Heaven, are you a woman! Have you no tears for that brave gentleman whose misery it is to call you wife! No tears for the man who was to have married you! Serpent! fiend! Oh! to think I loved and love you as I never did any creature since my own girlhood! To think how proud of you I was! How my foolish old heart rejoiced in all your prosperity, renewed its youth in you! Ah!" flinging out her withered hands, "may I never love or trust again. Margaret! Margaret! what have you done!"

She sat down and covered her face with her apron, and the wretched creature who had lived by her bounty and who loved her, perhaps, better than anything save self, fell at her feet with clasped, imploring hands.

"Madam! Miss Priscilla! Show me a little mercy! Whatever has been false in me, I have been all true to you. I have loved you, honoured you! Ah, madam! madam! Speak kindly to me!—me so wretched, so forsaken, that I can call no man or woman friend!"

Then Miss Priscilla uncovered her face.

"Girl!" she said, "you ask too much; your sin is too terrible. If you want forgiveness ask it of Heaven and the men you have so wronged, not of me, not of me, least I say words harsher than I would. Down on your knees at your husband's feet and pray for his pardon. Work for it, slave for it all your days, and it may be, when he sees your repentance and your works, Heaven will accept them as atonement."

Then she rose and went out, locking the door behind her, and Margaret sat by the open window, thinking, thinking, thinking, while the scent of lilies and honeysuckle floated up to her, and the bees droned outside, and the sleepy, languorous day wore on to golden noon, from golden noon to the sultry afternoon.

Then she saw Hartley and Hirst cross the green lawn, and Hartley leaned upon Hirst and went wearily, as if all the life were stricken from his limbs.

Her dark eyes deepened with pity for him, the sort of pity one accords a wounded animal, and she sighed to herself,—

"I have lost them both."

Then she remembered Hartley's mention of his wealth, and said,—

"Surely he will do something for me out of his abundance, so that I need not starve; for though I wronged him he sinned against me first;" and comforted by these thoughts she sat down almost calmly to write the confession that would have killed some women.

When it was finished the afternoon had passed, and the whole earth was rejoicing in the cool stillness of the evening.

She leaned out of her window and drank in all the sweet scents that floated upwards, and was conscious of a dreamy pleasure in it all.

Half her sorrow and half her shame were already gone. She was a woman of curiously deadened sensibilities, though her fine tact, the mute appealing of her wonderful eyes, had impressed friends and acquaintances with a contrary opinion.

She was utterly incapable of deep and lasting passion of any sort; her mind was so singularly warped that she could not realise the enormity of her crime, and reflecting on Hartley's love counted on his forgiveness.

She was wiser than to believe Hirst would ever willingly meet her again, and so long as he lived she knew he would not forgive her. The soft dusk came on, and in the adjacent wood she heard the "jug, jug" of the nightingale, the screech of many owls, the whirring of the bats around and about.

The drawing-room windows were open, and she could hear Miss Priscilla's clear tone, less firm than usual, and interrupted now and again by those of Mrs. Lomax. Their words she could not hear, save now and again that one dearer to her than ever her husband's or Hirst's had been, "Bertie," and she said, with a sort of shiver,—

"Bertie! Bertie! what does she say of me? She never loved me, and now she will hate me!"

Later on Miss Priscilla appeared in the room.

"Will you have a light?" she asked, frigidly, and Margaret answered,—

"No, I like the dusk;" then she drew away from the window and stretched her hand to the table, feeling for a roll of paper. "This is my confession—take it; and when he comes to-morrow summon Bertie and Mr. Lomax that they may hear too. Let Hirst think as he will of me, but justify me to her."

Miss Priscilla took the roll.

"Justify you! Are you mad, Margaret Grant? I would rather think you were—that so I could pity you;" and, closing the door, she went out.

Then Margaret let down her beautiful hair and began to disrobe, and, despite all the events of the day, slept quietly and dreamlessly until the several clocks chimed eight.

Then she rose and dressed with care, for she knew the value of personal beauty, and knew, too, that beauty, however great, is enhanced by dress; but to-day she must appear penitent, pathetic, and so she took out a long black robe which fitted her admirably, and further served her purpose by increasing her clear pallor; she wore no ornaments, and her luxuriant hair was arranged with "careless care," which gave an appearance of neglect to it.

At nine her breakfast was served, and the maid inquired if she were better, the servants having been told "Miss Ashwin" was too indisposed to leave her room, and they concluded her morning walk in the hot sun had proved too much for her.

For Hirst's and Hartley's sake it was desirable so save scandal. Then, screening herself behind the curtains, she watched for Bertie's coming, knowing she had been summoned to the Hall by Miss Priscilla in accordance with her request.

First came Hartley, heavily, as one whose

heart is broken. He scanned the house dully, as if he thought to see his wife at one of the windows. Later she saw Bertie, pale and heavy-eyed, looking as if anxiety had given her a sleepless night.

Then Margaret trembled with fear of what they might do with her. Had she laid herself open to the law? If so would these men she had so greatly wronged have any mercy on her? And Bertie, too, would she use her eloquence to incense them further? She had never liked her.

So she sat in a fever of anxiety, and down sat Mrs. Priscilla had begun to read her confession.

The two men sat with drooped heads, whilst Bertie looked from one to the other with passionate pity. Mrs. Lomax frequently exclaimed, but no one seemed to hear her; and, with stern face and unflinching voice, Miss Priscilla laid bare her one-time favourite's past.

"You all think as badly of me as possible. This I do not much wonder at; but when you know all I believe you will accord me some pity, because all my life things have been against me, and there are many excuses to be made for me."

"Doubtless, Hartley Grant has told you my maiden name was not Ashwin; if not you will learn that as I proceed with my story. And you who have nothing in your lives to desire (if you are Christians) will let me go my way unmolested. I have done harm enough, but I might have done worse; and if I had been a rich woman I should have been set beyond temptation. My father is (for he yet lives) a Scotchman, and the minister of a small parish hidden away in the mountains, so far from main roads that very few tourists go that way. He is a stern, hard man, a bigot, and a slave to the opinions of others. My mother is of like nature, austere in ways and words, totally unfit to win the confidence or love of such an one as I.

"Year in and year out we lived at the Manse, a great, dreary, rambling house, always gloomy, always dull. I was allowed no companions, the village children were thought too rude and ignorant for me to associate with. My father was my only instructor. He taught me Greek and Latin, which I have since done my best to forget. I was passionately fond of music, but this taste was derided; and singing, with the exception of psalms, was not allowed in our house, neither was it frequent at the Kirk.

"I grew up restless, dissatisfied with everything, caring for no one, anxious only to go away from my wretched home; eager to see the world beyond, of which I had heard so much, and where I thought, despite my lack of accomplishments, I might win all I coveted, for I knew I was beautiful. My glass told me that, and when I looked round at the plain, freckled faces of my father's 'flock' I felt a thrill of joy.

"I was nineteen when Mr. Ashwin, the vicar of Terresdale, came to visit my father. He was an old college friend, and long since a widower, so he brought his daughter with him.

"She was of my own age and named Margaret, tall and dark, rather nice-looking. For lack of other friends I made her my friend, although we had no tastes in common, she being impulsive and romantic to an absurd degree.

"But she told me tales of the outer world that served to increase the longing I felt to see it. She had spent a season in town and one at Brighton, and her vivid descriptions of the gaieties in which she had shared maddened me.

"Well, she went away, but we corresponded pretty regularly, and so another two years passed; then her father died, and she went to live with some friends at Doncaster, who were very kind to her.

"In that summer (only last year) Hartley Grant came to our village on a sketching tour, and I chanced to meet him. He asked me if I could direct him to the Manse, as he had a letter of introduction to Mr. Ross. I answered he was my father, and I should be happy to take him to my home.

From the first I saw he admired me, and I encouraged him, because I liked his conversation. I told him all my longings and how I hated my

home and its surroundings, and he sympathised with me as no one had done before.

"Soon his admiration grew into a warmer feeling, and my father forbade him the house. He had a very poor opinion of artists and men who dressed faultlessly.

"Enraged at losing my companion, I contrived to meet him often and often in secret, and listened to his tale of love with an exultant heart.

"He was not dearer to me than any other man (poor Hartley winced). I think I am incapable of that sort of passion, but I did not dislike him, and through him I felt I could get my passport to the world I longed to live in.

"The end of this was that I fled from the Manse with him. He candidly told me he was not a rich man, but he had a sum of money sufficient for five or six months, and his pictures were sure to secure a good income when that was gone.

"He brought me to London, and we lodged at a good hotel, where I spent the first three months of my married life. I was quite happy then, having money at my command, and spending my days in a continual round of pleasure.

"After that Hartley began to look grave, and soon he told me his money was nearly spent and we must go to cheaper lodgings. We did so, and he began to paint with feverish anxiety; but his pictures would not sell, and we had to part with one thing after another until we were nearly destitute.

"Again we changed our lodgings, this time to go into horribly close ones in a dingy street at Holborn, not far from the prison, and I began to complain. I was not born for poverty; I could not endure it, or struggle against it, as some women do; and perhaps I reproached Hartley too bitterly with the pass he had brought me to.

"Then I wrote to my father for help, and he replied coldly that I was no longer a child of his, and that I might have known what would result from a marriage with a wandering artist, who probably was as ungodly as he was improvident.

"I think I hated my father in that hour, and Hartley too, and being angry I acted for once on the impulse of the moment. My husband was out trying to sell a little portrait he had made of me, so I put on my hat and cloak and went into the dirty street. I had been delighted with my first sight of London, but the reverse of the picture disgusted me, and I longed to get away.

"I walked into a pawnbroker's shop and disposed of my wedding ring, and with the money thus obtained started for Doncaster, where I at once found out Margaret Ashwin. She was very glad to see me, and her friends made me very welcome for her sake. Her uncle, however, had become, unfortunately, insolvent, and they were all busy in preparing to start for Canada.

"I stayed with them some time, trying vainly for employment, and they helping me all they could. They asked if reconciliation between myself and Hartley was quite out of the question. I answered, 'Yes, I had left him because of his ill-treatment.'

"Then they invited me to go with them to Canada; but this I declined doing. The life of labour they proposed was anything but agreeable to me even in thought; what, then, would the reality have been?

"At last they left England, and I had begged Margaret to let me adopt her name, the better I said to hide myself from my husband. She not only consented, but gave me all the money she could spare, and I took lodgings in a poor part.

"I found no work, and my money was quickly gone; then I saw Mrs. Lawes's advertisement, and determined to walk the distance. But my strength failed me, and but for Miss Priscilla I must have died in the snow.

"It seemed when I regained consciousness that I was in Paradise, and when Miss Lomax offered me the post of companion I could have cried in my gratitude, though I am not given to weeping.

"From the first I loved Miss Vandeleur better than any other creature I had ever met.

Perhaps her very coldness to me only increased my affection; it was so new to find any indifference to me. She distrusted me, but I was not afraid; my past was hidden away, and who should tell her of it? And besides and beyond this she was generous, and even should it come to her knowledge who and what I was she would not make it known.

"Then Hirst began to pay me little delicate attentions. I did not encourage him, neither did I repulse him; but I cursed my folly that had left me fettered for life to a poor man—I who was so ambitious, I who loved riches and luxury above all things, and I assumed virtues I did not possess.

"When his love became palpable I was a little afraid for a short time, and questioned myself what I should do if he should ask me to marry him; but when, indeed, he did this I acted upon the resolve I had come to weeks before, and said, 'Yes.' I did not suppose I should ever be detected, and I could not forego the advantages offered me. I did not love him, it is true, but I should have been a good wife to him.

"This is all, for the rest you know, and now I put myself utterly and entirely in the power of those I have wronged. Hirst should not find it very hard to forgive, seeing I have wronged him least. I suppose it is useless to ask Hartley's forgiveness, though I should be glad of it; and all I beg of Miss Priscilla and Bertie is to pity me, and remember I love them, and to the former I am very grateful. Remember, too, I am waiting anxiously to hear my fate.

"MARGARET GRANT."

The utter shamelessness, the light regard of her sin shown in this remarkably calm and concise confession held Miss Priscilla silent, and Bertie could only glance nervously at Hirst's white, angry face, and the agony in Hartley's eyes.

Mrs. Lomax exclaimed loudly, but her sister-in-law checked her, and, ringing, told the servant who delivered the summons to request Miss Ashwin's presence in the library.

Margaret went down trembling a little; but when she entered, and saw the pain on Hartley's face was greater than the reproach, she took her cue from it, and stood a drooping, black-robed figure, with the downcast eyes of a penitent Magdalen.

Bertie would not look at her, and Hirst affected unconsciousness of her proximity, so Miss Priscilla spoke for them all in hard and measured tones.

"We have all heard what you had to say in your defence, and I must say, madam, if you had tried from now until Doomsday you could not have made it more heartless, more base. What pity you can expect I am at a loss to know, seeing all your troubles have been the results of discontent, selfishness, and sin.

"I loved you, Margaret Ashwin, Rose, or Grant—whichever you may choose to call yourself; but you have killed my love, and sooner than have you near me day by day I would leave the home where I have lived from my birth, forswear my friends, and retain only a pittance for my daily needs. I wash my hands of you. It remains with your unfortunate husband to accord you what punishment you deserve. If he can be merciful he is more than man."

Margaret made no reply, only let her face drop upon her breast and looked her hands together. Hartley looked at her with a wild, agonised loving gaze.

She had sinned against him sorely, had spoiled his life, broken his heart, and yet the man loved her, and loathing her sin, clung on to the sinner with a godlike fidelity.

"Margaret!" he said, and his laboured voice was hoarse and strange. "Margaret! oh!"—the yearning in his tone, the divine pity of it!—"wife!" and the guilty woman started to hear that dear name fall again from his lips—started, and felt a throb of triumphant hope.

She lifted her eyes to him; he had risen, and now advanced, whilst the others looked wonderingly at him.

"You have sinned sorely against me, and I

know you never loved me, although—Heaven forgive you!—you swore you did. You have made a miserable wretch of me; but only come back to me and I will do my best to forget. Perhaps you could not bear poverty—perhaps I tried you too greatly with my sorrows. That I shall never know; but—but—wife, I can't hold out against you. Heaven knows it is not I who am merciful, but something within me that compels me to this act."

Bertie sobbed aloud, whilst Miss Priscilla cried,—

"Down on your knees, girl, and thank him for his goodness. Some women have been 'killed with less kindness;' and obeying an impulse stronger than herself, the guilty wife fell down before him incapable of speech. Amidst the sobbing of the women and the wondering reverence of Hirst, he raised her from her knees, and kissed her once upon the brow.

"There is no happiness for me," he said, "but your honour is saved," and so put her away, never to kiss her again, never to catch her to his heart with the quick impulse of passionate love, because, since they parted, other lips had laid kisses upon hers, other arms had embraced her; for her sake to lead a miserable, desolate life, uncomplaining, unrepentant. She had been weak, he was strong, and mercy becomes the strong; so he reasoned. And she, well, despite all, she would be happy because she had obtained what her heart desired, and she would never understand the anguish that his finer nature would endure, whenever his eyes rested upon her, or his thoughts dwelt with her.

In the midst of her sobs Miss Priscilla said,—
"Go back to your room. You have no share in our final arrangements."

And Margaret turned to go, but she paused a moment before Bertie.

"Will you shake hands and wish me good-bye?" she said, a little tremulously. One moment the girl drew back, the next she yielded her fingers to the other's clasp.

"If he can forgive you and be merciful, surely I can who have not suffered—at your hands!"

And so they parted.

Then Hirst grasped Hartley's hand.

"Old man," he said, "old man"—and broke off with the natural hatred of an Englishman to display any emotion.

But Miss Priscilla was above such considerations. She took the haggard face between her hands, and said, boldly,—

"If Heaven had seen fit to make me a wife and a mother, I should have desired such a son as you," and kissed his cheek.

Then she turned to Bertie.

"Child," she said, "I've wronged you. I began to know this some time since, but my pride held me back from confessing it. Can you forgive an old woman's hardness and folly?"

It is needless to say how Bertie Vandeleur answered.

Three weeks the Hall sheltered Margaret, much against Miss Priscilla's wish; but Hartley Grant showed her it would be better for himself and Hirst, in that it would save all scandal, and he prayed her to help him in his endeavour to spare his wife's name.

So it was given out that Hartley Grant was an old lover of Margaret's, and that they had been parted by cruel circumstances, that Hirst had given her back her freedom. To maintain this fiction the banns were published in the village church, and wife and husband were united a second time.

Miss Priscilla even went so far as to declare Ashwin was the name of some good people who had adopted Margaret as their child, so she was married in her maiden name of Rose.

Then Hartley took her away, and those who had given her shelter in her time of need, those she had so cruelly wronged, saw her no more, but they heard of her often as a leader of fashion; so at last she had attained the prize she strove for, and it troubled her little in her prosperity to remember through what seas of guilt she had waded to win it.

"Why," said Mr. Vandeleur, looking up from his paper, "you can't mean you are running from England because a devil in the guise of a lovely woman has tricked you completely? Stay and fight it out with yourself, Hirst."

"The young man shook his head.

"I can't, sir; the fact is, I am thoroughly out of conceit with the whole place, and I'm going to try change of air and scene as a remedy. A fellow can't take such a blow as I have had with equanimity, and I feel as if every wretched little cub knows my secret and her shame, so I shall go."

"Of course, you please yourself, but I'm disappointed. Why, boy, the shooting days are coming on, and there's nothing like a day's sport to make one forget one's troubles—in fact, to ignore the existence of women entirely. What does Mrs. Lomax say to this freak? I'll warrant Miss Priscilla sets her face against it."

"On the contrary, each advises it, urges me to go at my earliest convenience, thinks it best for me."

"Then I've no more to say," disconsolately; then, seeing Bertie fly by the open window, "Bertie, my girl, come here."

She stood framed as it were in the odorous jasmine and superb magnolia, a sweet, fair presence, with her dark eyes looking darker than usual under the shadow of her curly hair.

"Good morning, Hirst. Well, father, what is it?" brushing a too intrusive caterpillar from her white dress, and then smiling up at him saucily.

"Why, Hirst is going away from us next week, and all my persuasion will not avail to keep him with us."

"Going away!" the treacherous colour fading a little from her pretty face. "And where are you going?" gathering some of the jasmine and fastening it at her throat; "to the Antipodes!" and she moved a little so as to leave herself more in the shadow.

There was a softness and a sweetness about her to which he had hitherto been blind, and he answered in a gentler tone than he generally used in addressing her,—

"Not quite so far, Bertie. I thought of doing France and Italy; perhaps, too, I shall take a journey up the Rhine."

She interrupted him smilingly.

"Pray do; no one nowadays has finished his education until he has visited old German castles, and heard their legends, gone up the Rhine and seen—oh—" not staying to conclude her former sentence, "I hope you will see the Lorelei. She'll turn out in honour of your coming, doubtless; but don't go alone to visit her, and don't covet a near sight of her lovely face and golden hair. I've a fancy that were I a man golden-haired beauties would have no charm for me."

Mr. Vandeleur broke in laughingly,—

"That isn't generous of you, Bertie."

"Oh," coolly, "I know that, and it sounds conceited because I happen to be dark, but we brunettes have the advantage of blondes; we can wear almost any colour under the sun, whilst they are confined to black, white, blue, and violet."

She talked very hurriedly; usually her words were dropped lazily and slowly.

"And pray, Hirst, shall you confine yourself wholly to the countries named, or are you going to extend your travels?"

"I think of crossing to America; some fellows I know have invited me to join them. If I do I shall be absent several months. What have you done?" as Bertie uttered a little cry; she answered, carelessly,—

"Broken a link in my chain. I have a foolish habit of toying with it when I am talking. Oh! it is of little consequence. I suppose," harking back to the old subject, "you will come back quite Americanised, and interlard your conversation with the latest Yankeeisms; you may even cultivate a nasal twang. It would be change and a proof that you had travelled. Ugh! how I hate Americans!" with sudden fierceness.

Hirst looked at her surprisedly.

"Why! How have they offended you, Bertie! and do you know any individually?"

"Thank Heaven, no!" plausibly; "but they

are such a vulgar, impertinent people boasting always of the 'almighty dollar,' and careless of everything beyond or beside. Pray commend me to Brother Jonathan."

"She's awfully vicious," Mr. Vandeleur said, with a laugh; "don't go too near, Hirst," as the young man crossed the room to her; but he, with a smile, stepped out and joined her.

"Take me to see your roses," he demanded, and she preceded him to the rose-garden, her father watching them go with a satisfied air.

"He can't mourn over that woman for ever. I hope when he does choose a wife it will be Bertie. I don't think she dislikes him;" and he resumed his paper. Meanwhile the young couple had reached the rose-garden.

"It isn't so lovely now as it was a fortnight since," Bertie said, glancing at her companion. "You see, although it is still quite sultry, we are in the early days of September. Shall I give you a bud for your buttonhole?" and he, replying in the affirmative, she cut him a deep crimson, heavily scented flower. "When are you leaving us, Hirst?"

"I shall be gone by Friday next, certainly. You know why I am going, Bertie!" in a very shame-faced way.

"Yes," she answered, sympathetically; "I hope the journey will accomplish your design; you need forgetfulness."

"I have one consolation," grimly; "no one but my mother and Miss Priscilla will miss me or lament my absence."

"Happy man! You won't feel yourself called upon to curtail your pleasures because of letters containing always the reiterated plea, 'Come back!' or suffer from reproaches that 'You cannot care for me as you stay so long away.'"

The prospect, much as it seemed to please her, did not gratify him equally. "I must have led a useless life," he said, thoughtfully, "to find so few to miss me. Your father deprecates my absence because he will want a companion in his shooting; and you, why you, Bertie, will not miss me at all."

"Oh! yes, I shall," quickly; then, seeing his pleased look, added maliciously, "because there is such a deplorable lack of young and presentable men in the neighbourhood. Do you know," lowering her voice and looking demure, "I am often afraid I shall die an old maid! The reflection makes a wretched woman of me."

Hirst laughed outright.

"I guess when I come back I shall find you married to some handsome and dashing young squire, Bertie!"

"Thank you, no; no one but a peer of the realm need aspire to my heart and hand. I guess," in a moralising way, "I shall be like the old maids of Lea, who refused all good offers in the hope of getting better ones, and in the end were left to bawl 'what's-her-name!'—tresses. I shall presently discover a love for knitting and cats; no old maid is perfect without the two things. Can't you picture me making stockings for the whole parish, Hirst?"

"No, I can't; but I can see you a happy wife, finding your pleasure in what pleases your lord, satisfied only when he is with you, and holding him up to all your friends as 'the best and dearest of his sex.'"

Bertie grimaced slyly.

"You'll say presently I shall develop into a Griselida; pray don't perjure yourself to say pretty things, and really your would-be compliments are such new things, they make me uncomfortable—fact!"

Half an hour after he put out his hand.

"I'm going, Bertie. Good-bye, my dear, keep a warm place in your heart for an old friend."

Her bright eyes shone brighter as she said, with a careless laugh.

"I shall not forget you; your aunt and mother will talk so continually of you that forgetfulness will be impossible. Good-bye!" And then, when the last sound of his feet had died away, and she could see him no more, this silly little woman rushed into an arbour, and covering her face with pretty, trembling hands, cried as though her heart would break.

A year dragged slowly by with Bertie, and her

knight had not returned to her; she heard of him often, but from him never, and her heart wearied and hungered for the sight of his dear face, the touch of his hand, the sound of his voice.

She had grown paler and graver, was less ready to laugh and jest, and Mr. Vandeleur sometimes grew anxious; but the mother, who knew her child's secret said nothing, only by little acts of love strove to win her to brighter thoughts and forgetfulness of Hirst.

By tacit consent the mention of her love was a tabooed subject between them, but Bertie grew hot when she remembered her wild confession that spring morning.

Miss Priscilla and Mrs. Lomax had formed a very innocent conspiracy; they never mentioned the girl to Hirst save when he asked for news of her, and when some months had worn away he began to grow strangely impatient at this state of affairs.

When the first bitterness of his trouble had worn away he often found himself thinking of and wondering what Bertie was doing, but his two correspondents did not satisfy his curiosity in the least.

"My dear," the astute Miss Priscilla said, "the less he hears of her the more he'll long for news," which showed she understood the perversity of men better than many married women.

She was quite right; and one day at the close of September she had the pleasure of telling Bertie that Hirst was returning in a few days.

He came, and when the girl saw him she knew in her heart he loved Margaret no longer, and prayed Heaven would be so good to her as to give her his love.

Day by day they met, and Hirst found her gentler and more sympathetic than he had once believed she could be; and some new feeling for her stirred his heart, whilst a sick jealousy disturbed his peace when he saw Mr. Lanark was her frequent follower.

November came, and the twentieth being Mrs. Lomax's birthday a gay company was gathered at the Hall. Bertie had dressed herself very much as on the night they first saw Margaret, only white lace had taken the place of the frosted tulle, and choice exotics nestled in her hair and at her bosom.

Late in the evening Hirst drew her into the conservatory, and, leading her to a seat, bent over her.

"Bertie," he said, and his breath came hard and fast, "I love you—ah! dear, how I love you; Can you forgive the insult I paid you two years since, the folly of which I have been guilty, and not only forgive me, but love me."

He put an arm about her, and she did not resist, so he took courage, and gathering her closer kissed her blushing face and pretty lips.

"What answer will you give me darling?" he pleaded.

"I think there is—there is little need to ask—you have taken it"—then with sudden selfishness, born of a latent fear—"are you sure, Hirst, you love me as dearly as you did the 'rare pale Margaret'?"

"Jealous Bertie!" he questioned, with a happy laugh, "I loved her with my heart, but you with my head as well as my heart. I have but one desire—to spend my life in your service. Darling, are you content?"

"Oh, my dear! my dear!" drooping her head on his breast, whilst from the drawing-room ring out the words:—

"Love, let me love thee, as in days of yore,
Constant I'll prove me, loving more and more;
Only to love thee, all the world above,
This is all I plead for, love, oh! let me love."

[THE END.]

NEARLY every man, woman, and child in Egypt is a smoker of cigarette, and a pipe is hardly ever seen in the mouth of a native.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps, from Dr. BORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

CUPID AND PEACHES.

—101—

"THERE'S Jeremiah—and the peaches!" snapped Miss Prudence Mattison, her dark eyes gleaming sombre thunders in the direction of a lank country boy who was mopping his forehead with a red cotton handkerchief, as he watered his horses at the stone trough, just outside the hedge that surrounded John Thorndyke's farm.

Inside the waggon were rows of peach-baskets, full of great velvety spheres, glowing beneath a pink mist of netting.

"Well!"

This lazy little query was languidly dropped by Kate Thorndyke, who had been sitting with her aunt on the front porch for the past hour, as her dark blue, dreamy eyes reluctantly sank from sunset wonders to this world of actualities.

"Well! It's far from well!" growled Miss Mattison. "Here these peaches have come back from town—"

"Couldn't help it, marm," interpolated the rueful knight of the red handkerchief, as he stumped up the piazza-steps, to give an account of himself. "You told me not to sell them peaches under your price, and the market was so full that I couldn't, so in course I had to bring 'em home agin."

"And didn't you know that as the peaches won't keep till to-morrow that it was better to sell at any price than not at all? Oh, Jeremiah, Jeremiah! I will no one ever succeed in beating a thimbleful of wit into that red head of yours!" queried Miss Prudence, seemingly of the universe at large, as she tilted her sharp nose and angular chin, and searched the blue vault of heaven despairingly.

The namesake of the prophet ambled ruefully away, his handkerchief trailing in the dust; and Miss Mattison and her pretty niece were left alone to consider the situation.

Not that John Thorndyke, the handsome young widower who owned Thorndyke Farm and used it as a summer residence, would have cared two straws whether those peaches were wasted or not; but his aunt and sister, who had been left at the head of affairs when he had been called away on business right in the midst of the fruit harvest, had determined to conduct affairs so wisely as to come off with flying colours, and to be a perpetual demonstration of the thrift and capability of womankind to scoff mankind as embodied in John.

"If John found out about this, how he would tease us!" mused Kate.

"We must do something," declared Miss Prudence, desperately. "I'd go back to town with the peaches myself, but it is really too late," she sighed, as she noted that the sunset was fading into twilight, and the intermittent lamps of the fireflies were already flashing along the waxen-dark hedge.

"I have it!" exclaimed Kate, suddenly, clapping her pink palms as a brilliant idea solved the vexed question. "We'll tin them, and sell them to the stores."

"That we will," assented Miss Prudence, nodding so vigorously that her short black curls stood on end, like Queen Dido's in the old nursery game. "We'll do finely, if everyone helps—you and I, and Sue, Mary and Jeremiah."

"Me too!" piped a small, sweet, unexpected voice; and Baby Kitt, a golden-haired morsel, of five years, rolled from the little pink cot where she had been taking her afternoon nap, and came forward to demand her rightful share in the domestic excitement.

So she was provided with a kitchen knife, which had outlived its best days, with which she hacked ineffectually away at the rosy peaches, during intervals of hovering over bubbling kettles, until her white eyelids began to droop, and she was borne away from the busy scene.

Miss Prudence had her subordinates in excellent training; so, although Jeremiah, heaving a long sigh that would have done credit to the weeping prophet himself, when his boon companion whistled in vain by the hedge, and Sue

and Mary exchanged rueful glances, as they remembered how everyone else was eating peaches and cream at the thrifling of the Daughters of Temperance, over in the round-topped school-house, no one uttered a word of complaint, while they worked steadily away through the long, scented summer night.

The glow of dawn was just creeping over the pearly sky, and the sleepy young birds were beginning to chirrup, when the last tin was sealed and marshalled with the long ranks of its comrades on the white pine floor.

"Has it paid?" yawned Kate, brushing away a clinging velvet coil of peach paring from her checked apron with stiff fingers.

Sue, Mary, and Jeremiah remained circumspectly non-committal.

"Of course it has paid!" replied Miss Mattison, every short black curl defiantly triumphant, as she regarded the rows of peach tins much as if they formed an important link in the chain of woman's progress.

It was a perfect day for a nutting excursion. The purple mist slept on the distant swells of prairie as softly as a bridal veil; the maples, sumachs, and oaks were fairly iridescent, and the fiery hickory nuts were tumbling from their husks with every breeze that blew, much to the delight of the newboys and bootblacks of Kent Brainerd's mission school.

Kent Brainerd was the principal owner of the great foundry that puffed its clouds of soot and smoke upwards at all hours of the day and night.

He also owned a large farm, and was the projector of a new railroad; so even if he had been other than the handsome bachelor he was the girls of Brainerdville would have deemed him a golden prize in the matrimonial pool.

But he had fought his way up from the ranks, and now seemed to see in every ragged boy a counterpart of his old self, as he ran errands, sold newspapers, and did everything possible to aid his frail, pretty little mother in her struggle for bare bread and a leaking roof.

So he founded a lodging-house for poor boys, established a mission school, and devoted every moment that he could spare from business to the elevation of the little ragamuffins, who adored him with all their warm hearts.

"So odd of him!" said Rosa Boffin, a pretty girl with fair hair, long eyelashes, which she made the most of, and pretty gestures and tricks of expression, which she practised daily before a mirror.

But, nevertheless, she developed an unsuspected vein of plety, and took a class in the mission school, where she beamed upon the thirteen boys that fell to her share as sweetly and sunnily as was possible for any one to do whose heart was seething all the time with detestation for themselves and their pranks.

The children had finished gorging themselves upon a substantial lunch, and Kent Brainerd and all the teachers of the mission school were seated at an especial table as Miss Boffin's invited guests.

It was docketed with the daintiest napery, bright with silver and coloured glassware, and loaded with the most tempting of lunches, yet Kent Brainerd's glance kept roving towards his adventurous youngsters.

"Won't you have another peach, Mr. Brainerd?" said Rosa, sweetly.

"That foolhardy little Tom Matthews will certainly fall," said Kent, absently, as he watched a little carrot-headed fellow climbing like a monkey to the very topmost bough of an elm-tree.

"I wish he would fall! I wish every ragamuffin in the world would break his good-for-nothing little neck, and then perhaps Kent Brainerd would have eyes and ears for other people!" Rosa breathed into the little pink ear of Mamie St. John, another pretty mission teacher.

Rosa's pity was evidently only a thin veneering.

"Oh, I suppose he's training up Tom Matthews' cross-eyed little sister, Biddy, for his wife. He appears to be just infatuated with the

sluts!" whispered Mamie, in return, making a little grimace of pretty disdain.

"Another peach did you say, Miss Rosa?" inquired Kent, after he had watched little Tom descend in safety. "Yes, thank you, I will have one."

But a fat young man, who was devoted to Mamie St. John, and likewise to the good things of this world, had helped himself to the last peach in the cut-glass dish, and as Rosa tilted the tin to renew the supply, something fell with the peaches—something that proclaimed itself brightly as gold when an arrow of sunlight caught it.

It was a locket, with the inscription "Aunt Kate to little Kit" traced on one side, as Kent discovered after immersing it in a goblet of water, and wiping it with a napkin which bore with the B. B. "B." done in red etching-silk.

Kent opened it curiously and studied the face within attentively.

Frank, sweet eyes of darkest blue met his own; a saucy, tender mouth laughed up at him; and he could almost fancy that the dimple nestling in the sweet pea cheek deepened beneath his gaze, so overflowing with radiant life was the girlish face.

"How romantic!" cooed Mamie St. John, peeping over his shoulder. "Now, of course, you will trace the peaches from Johnson's, where Rosa bought them, to the place where they were tinned, and never rest till you have found the fair original, when the thing will end in cream-coloured satin and the Wedding March!"

"Thank you for the suggestion!" said Kent, his dark eyes sparkling mischievously.

"Nonsense!" broke in Rosa, a trifle tartly; for she did not relish this trifling. "Mr. Brainerd will never care half as much for any woman as he does for little Tom Matthews, Billy Jenkins, and the rest of the ragged crew."

"Tis said that every man meets with his Waterloo in the form of some fair woman. Even Michael Angelo had his Vittoria Colonna, and why should not Kent Brainerd, that rugged old bachelor with plebeian tastes," waving his shapely hand toward the "ragged crew" in question, "have his Kate?" laughed Kent.

Many a true word is spoken in jest, however, and Rosa would have felt the misty foundations of her rapidly-rising air-castle beginning to melt away, could she have seen Kent carefully lay away the little locket in the pink satin folds of a glove case that she had given him for Christmas, as he solicited,—

"Why shouldn't I at least trace out 'little Kit' and give her back her locket?"

"Kent Brainerd is one of the few men that I would be willing to trust your happiness to, my pet. And it was all those peaches. Blessings on that stupid Jeremiah!" beamed Miss Mattison, kissing the half-hidden flushed cheek belonging to her niece, who had just buried her head in her aunt's ample lap, after telling the story that is as old as the hills, yet always as fresh and sweet as the rosebuds.

By which it will be seen that Mamie St. John was a true prophet.

"It wasn't all those peaches," said Kate, raising her pretty, crumpled dark head with a pretty little laugh. "Part of it was Kit; for if she hadn't dropped her locket into the kettle of peaches, like the dear little meddlesome darling that she is, I wouldn't be the happy girl that I am to-day."

"Give credit where credit is due," laughed John Thorndyke, coming into the room. "If the much-maligned little god, Cupid, who occasionally does do a good thing, hadn't saved Brainerd from all the girls who must have been pulling caps for him, and our 'queen-rose' from the lovers who were buzzing about her like so many bees, and brought them together, peaches would have availed very little."

"It was a clear case of Cupid and peaches!" admitted Miss Mattison with her expressive little curls all a-flutter as she beamed felicitations upon the universe in general through her steel-bowed spectacles.

THE JEALOUS SISTER.

—105—

CHAPTER I.

"Down, Bruce, down! You shan't kiss me, sir! I won't allow it! Oh! why won't you behave, Bruce, when you see that I am too wretched to live! Boo-hoo, boo-hoo! I wish I were dead and buried—that I do!"

Handsome Paul Denver, striding along by the brook-side, with his fishing-rod over his shoulder, that golden June day, caught those sad words, mixed with sobs, in a sweet young voice, and coming to an abrupt pause, looked about for the girl and the dog.

On the green, mossy bank, under the shade of bending willows, she was reclining, a dainty, white-gowned beauty, her dimpled white arms pushing down the big black Newfoundland in whose curly mane her face was half hidden, the tumbled waves of her golden hair gleaming like sunshine against the dark setting.

Our hero deliberately stood still and listened while the girl stifled several tempestuous sobs, and continued talking to the dog quite as if he had been a human being.

"It was hateful in Phil and those other girls to do it, wasn't it, Bruce! You wouldn't be as mean, would you!—and you are only a dog. But you love me better than anyone else does, I know; and you would buy me a nice bicycle if you had the money, wouldn't you, dear old fellow!" hugging the shaggy black head.

"Ahem!" coughed Paul Denver, advancing, and the dog growled, and the girl started, lifting her sunny head and showing the fairest face he had ever seen, despite the tears that had reddened the eyelids. She was almost a child—sixteen at the most—and the enchanting curves and dimples of childhood still lingered about cheeks and chin, though the form was budding into woman's girlhood; while large blue eyes of large limpid blue, shaded by long-fringed lashes of deepest brown, lighted an enchanting face all lilies and roses, sweet and arch at once, as only such a young face can be.

"Please keep off your dog; I wish to speak to you," Denver said, winningly, approaching as near as he dared.

Clutching the dog's collar, the girl arose with a free, girlish grace, saying, gently:

"Well, sir?"

Paul flushed a little as the clear blue eyes looked into his brown laughing ones; but he said, valiantly:

"I beg your pardon, but I could not help overhearing a remark of yours just now. You were wishing for a bicycle very much, and I wish to say that your beautiful Newfoundland is well worth the price of one. I will buy him, if you care to sell."

Dimmy lowered over the beautiful lifted face, the blue eyes flashed, the throat swelled. She cried out, indignantly:

"Sell Bruce—my darling Bruce! I ought to set him at you for suggesting such a cruel thing!"

"But I assure you I would not be cruel to the splendid fellow. I would cherish him, both for his own sake—and yours. Indeed, I am very sorry I offended you, for my offer was meant in kindness. I thought of my own little sister at home, who gets anything she wants by the shedding of a few tears, and I wish to gratify your desire."

Still grasping the dog's collar, she stood facing him rather belligerently, tempted to turn and leave him, yet staying half against her will, rooted to the spot by a fascination she could not gainsay, for surely he was a goodly object to look upon in his athletic young manhood, so tall and straight and handsome, with a face that won her in spite of herself, it was so frank and kind, despite the lurking mischief and daring of his eyes and smile.

Something held him also to the spot, though he knew it was almost impertinent not to go. But then one does not see such beauty every day, and Paul was only four-and-twenty.

As she regarded him in cold silence, he braced himself and remarked, imploringly:

"I say, your dog is a raging beauty. Mayn't I make friends with him?"

She answered, poutingly:

"You may pat his head. He is not at all vicious."

This permission allowed of such close approach to the mistress that he was charmed, and exclaimed:

"He is a magnificent fellow! I don't blame you now for being angry at me for wanting to buy him. I beg your pardon over and over!"

"I love him so!" the girl cried, with a sob of tenderness in her sweet voice.

"And I love you so!" thought the young fellow, wondering how he could manage to stay and talk to her awhile longer.

He exclaimed suddenly:

"Did you see that trout leap in the water? Wasn't it a beauty?"

"I didn't see it," she replied; and no wonder, for it was all in his imagination.

He continued eagerly.

"I've been tramping two hours hunting a good place to fish, and I've struck it here. May I stay a little while?" sitting down and casting his fly into the rippling stream.

"Oh, certainly; for Bruce and I are going now," half turning away.

"Oh, please don't; I shall think that I am scaring you off. Stay till I get that pretty speckled trout, and you shall have it for your supper."

She gave a little laugh, sweet as the chiming of silver bells, and sank down on the bank with Bruce between them; but saying, artfully:

"I think I will rest awhile, for I have been on an errand into town, and am rather tired."

He was frankly pleased, and said, gratefully,—
"Thank you so much for letting me stay. This is an ideal spot for anything!"

There was a twinkle in his eyes, but she did not notice it, as she stroked the dog's head with loving hands, and watched him throw his line with consummate skill.

Her heart was beating with a strange new happiness, but she feared that she ought not to stay, and the bashful colour mantled exquisitely on her round cheeks.

Paul angled awhile in silence, then threw her a friendly glance, exclaiming,—

"Please forgive me, but I've been wondering and wondering what 'Phil' and the other girls did that made you so angry!"

"So you heard that?" wistfully.

"Yes; and I felt so angry with all of them, and so sorry for you. Do tell me how it was, and let me sympathise with you over it."

Eyes and smile, so tender and persuasive, seconded the words, and won her girlish confidence.

She exclaimed, impulsively,—

"Well, you see, they are going to have a bicycle picnic to-morrow. I say it is mean of Phil, because she planned it all herself, and just to keep me at home, I know; for we have only one bicycle in the family, and because she is the elder one of us she claims it all the time, and I can only ride when she chooses to stay at home."

"Who is Phil?"

"My half-sister, Phyllis Waring. I am Hilda Stuart, you know. She says the bicycle is more hers than mine, so she uses it nearly all the time. I say it is downright selfish, don't you?" appealingly, the blue eyes flooded with sudden tears.

"It's a shame! Why don't you have one of your own?"

"Oh, we can't afford it. Mamma is a widow, and her income is very small. The manager of the farm takes almost all the profits for his pay. But Phil insisted on one bicycle, and now she claims it all the time, and mamma doesn't take my part. Phil rules everything, and she doesn't want me to go anywhere until after she is married. She says two girls in the market at once will not do."

How charming she was in her naïve confidences! He laughed gaily, as he asked,—

"Well, hasn't Phil made her market yet?"

"No; that is, she won't have anyone that's

asked her yet, because she intends to marry rich. She and most of the other girls are just wild over Bertha Forbes's rich town cousin, that came to visit her last week. I think Phil would like to catch him."

"Ah! and have you seen him yet?" curiously.
"No; and I don't care to, either. Thank goodness, I'm not looking for a husband, even if I were old enough, and Phil says I'm not."

"But you would like to go to the picnic to-morrow?"

"Oh, wouldn't I!" eagerly.

"Can't you manage it? Aren't there any carriages going?"

"Oh, yes; two, with the chaperons and lunch-baskets. But do you think I'd ride with the old folks, and all the girls and boys on their bikes? No, never!" tragically.

"Would you come with me, Miss Stuart, if I could hire a nice bicycle somewhere for you to ride?" persuasively.

"You!" she cried, startled, the rich colour flaming into her cheeks.

"Yes. I'm invited, and fortunately, I have not asked any girl to go with me yet; so I invite you. Will you go?"

"But I don't even know you," faltering, excited.

"Miss Stuart, I would tell you my name, but I'm afraid. You said just now you didn't care to know me."

"Oh, no," innocently.

"Yes, you did. I'm Bertha Forbes's town cousin, Paul Denver."

She started, blushed, then laughed uneasily.

"Oh, why didn't you tell me sooner? I wouldn't have said such a rude thing."

"I'll forgive everything if you'll accept my invitation," tenderly.

"Ah, they wouldn't let me go, I know! Phil would rather go with you herself," frankly.

"But I have not asked her, and do not intend to. It is you I want. May I call and ask your mamma?"

"It would be no use," dolefully. "Phil would not let her consent, and she would be furious with me."

"I can't bear for you to miss it. If you don't go, I'll stay away myself;" and the brown eyes looked suddenly very sad and reproachful.

Her glance faltered from his and followed the fly bobbing on the water with the leaf shadows waving on its shining breast in sunlight and shade. She said, evasively,—

"Your trout is shy!"

"Yes, very," he responded; and again a laugh played in his eyes; but she did not perceive it. The girl felt curiously happy and elated, saying to herself that she would give the world almost just to go with him to the picnic to-morrow. Of course Phil would be angry and jealous; but, after all, need that matter? Fortunately he did not belong to Phil.

While she was in this reckless mood, he continued, pleadingly,—

"Little girl, if I come to-morrow after Phil has gone to the picnic and can get your mamma's consent, will you go with me?"

She flashed him a surprised and radiant smile, crying gladly,—

"Oh, how clever you are to think of such a plan!"

"Then you think it might succeed?"

"Perhaps so, for mamma is very sweet and gentle unless Phil is by to go against me. Perhaps you can persuade her if she is alone," hopefully.

"That is enough. Leave all to me, Miss Stuart, and I promise you that victory shall perch upon our banner."

He said *ou* so proudly that she rose up all in a flutter.

"Thank you for being so good to me," she faltered. "Come, Bruce, we must be going," for the crimson rays of the setting sun began to flood the green earth with glory.

He sprang up to clasp her hand in a most reluctant farewell.

"May I walk home with you?"

"Oh, no, thank you," only wishing that she dared consent.

"I shall dream all night of to-morrow," he whispered, darily.

"Don't make too sure of to-morrow," she laughed, as she caught up her hat from the grass and hurried away with Bruce.

CHAPTER II.

PAUL DENVER watched the graceful form till it was hidden from sight along the shady road, then he too sauntered away from the spot, murmuring enthusiastically:

"Sweet little darling, I'll help you to outwit your cruel sister to-morrow. No wonder she wishes to keep you hidden from sight, you are so much lovelier than she is. Ha! ha! won't she be furious to-morrow when we come spinning into the picnic-grounds on a bicycle built for two."

And hurrying off to the telegraph office, our hero sent off an order to the nearest large town for a tandem bicycle to be sent before morning.

Sitting on his cousin's broad, shady piazza that evening while the moon rose over the mountains, he said, with pretended carelessness:

"By the way, Bertha, do you know a pretty little girl named Hilda Stuart?"

"Of course I do. Isn't she the prettiest little thing you ever saw?"

"Yes. And why haven't I met her elsewhere, at your house, and among other girls?"

"Oh, her folks say she's too young to go regularly into society yet—though all the other girls about here were out at sixteen. But the truth is that Hilda's sister is jealous of her beauty, and makes her stay at home to help her mother."

"How can they be so cruel to the sweet girl?"

"Oh, they're not exactly cruel, only just, according to Phyllis's ideas. You see, they're only half-sisters, and the property came from Phyllis's father, Robert Waring, who was a prosperous farmer; while Hilda's father, though a gentleman and a scholar, depended on his pen for a living, and was too erratic a writer to lay up a competency. He came here one summer to board with the pretty little widow, and married her before the snow flew."

"He and his stepdaughter never got on well together, and I believe she was glad when he died, nine years later, leaving Hilda a little cherub of seven. She has never been over-fond of her little step-sister, and as the farm pays poorly, she takes the lion's share as her due, and says it's only fair for Hilda to drudge, as the farmers say, 'for her keep.'"

"The heartless creature! And to think I really admired that girl the few times I've met her—thought her pretty and fascinating!"

"So she is—enough so to keep her from jealousy of Hilda. But Phyllis is twenty-two, and they say that at twenty-two most girls get jealous of sweet sixteen," returned Bertha Forbes, who was a gray-eyed, brown-haired Madonna of nineteen, and already engaged to Hugh Manners, "the dearest fellow in the world," she said.

As her cousin made no reply to her last words, she continued, curiously,—

"Where did you see Hilda Stuart?"

"Oh, we met by chance—the usual way."

"How often, sir?" sternly.

"Only once."

"Then let there be no second time, for I won't have you flirting with sweet Hilda. Let her remain happy and careless, as she is now, until some one marries Phyllis off, and then the little girl can have her chance."

"Suppose some one marries Hilda off first—what then?"

"Are you thinking of doing it? Capital! But how furious Phyllis would be! Besides, Hilda is too young."

"My mother was married at sixteen."

"She should have been spanked and put to bed without her supper, for thinking of such a thing. Twenty is quite young enough for any girl to marry!" cried Bertha, whose wedding day was fixed for her next birthday.

As he only laughed, she changed the subject by asking,—

"Are you going to invite any girl to ride with you to the picnic to-morrow?"

"Perhaps so. How would you like me to bring Hilda Stuart?"

"I should be delighted; but the poor little thing has no bicycle, and says she won't ride with the chaperons in the carriage, so there's no hope of her coming. You might ask Phyllis. She would very likely accompany you."

"Very likely—when I ask her," laughed Paul, regularly; and after that he pursued the subject no farther.

But the next morning when Bertha and Hugh Manners set forth on their bikes for the picnic meeting-place at the bridge, Paul was nowhere to be seen, although it was certain he had not gone for Phyllis, for presently she appeared spinning along very gracefully on her bike, in a becoming cycling costume of dark blue, with a sailor hat on her wavy dark hair, and her bright black eyes shining with expectation, as she swept them over the party of twenty-eight cyclists, girls predominating.

She was certainly very graceful and pretty, and she had hoped in her heart to have Paul Denver for an escort, but she could not see him anywhere.

"Are we all ready to start?" she exclaimed.

"No; we were waiting for you and Mr. Denver. We thought maybe you were coming together. I wonder where he can be!" said Hugh Manners.

"He left home more than an hour ago on his bike, to go to the station, saying he had telegraphed for a new one," explained Bertha Forbes.

So the whole gay party, some patient, some impatient, but all very good-natured, waited about the bridge and the river fully half an hour for the delinquent, Phyllis Waring watching most closely of all, hoping to put herself in his way at the first moment of his appearance, and secure his escort for the nine mile spin to the picnic ground.

She had fallen in love with the handsome, careless young fellow, and was determined to win him if she could.

How bitter would have been her rage if she could have known that Paul Denver, on an elegant new tandem bike, had lurked about the neighbourhood of Cloverdale till he saw her depart, and then dashed boldly up to the fence and bowed gallantly to the pretty, pale-faced little widow, Mrs. Stuart, as she leaned over the front gate.

They had met before when he had called on Phyllis in company with his cousin Bertha, and they chatted pleasantly a few moments, when he said—

"Mrs. Stuart, I called to take your daughter to the picnic."

"Phyllis has gone already," she said, regretfully; for she knew how the girl would have enjoyed his escort.

But to her surprise he returned—

"It is Miss Hilda, I meant. Bertha said she had no bike of her own—so she can ride with me on this tandem, can't she? They will all be sadly disappointed if I don't bring her to the bridge where they are all waiting."

The inference was that he had been sent for Hilda, so she hesitated, secretly fearing Phil's wrath.

"Really, I don't think—" she began, timidly, when Hilda came bounding down the path with Bruce, and greeted him with such a smile and blush, that he said to himself he would beg the old lady by the hour, or carry the girl off by force, before he relinquished his purpose.

But with Hilda's help it did not take ten minutes; for how could she refuse her darling when the rosy mouth trembled and the blue eyes swam in tears! So she said, gently—

"Well, well, I don't want to disappoint you, dear. I hope I am not doing wrong; but you may go and get ready."

But while the girl was donning her pretty blue cycling suit, she had many misgivings, that culminated, when Hilda came back, in the timorous remark—

"When you get to the bridge, love, perhaps you ought to take Phil's bike and let her ride with Mr. Denver. You're almost too young to ride with gentlemen, you know."

"Do you think so," asked Paul Denver, with a quiet smile, and Hilda laughed and kissed her; but neither one promised to obey her suggestion, and she felt rather silly at having made it.

"Only," she said to herself, "I can tell Phil I said so, and then she can't scold at much over Hilda's going."

Paul helped Hilda to mount the bike, then sprang on himself, and away they went in grand style, Mrs. Stuart restraining Bruce, who whined piteously to follow his loved young mistress.

She could not help thinking what a handsome couple they were, and of what might happen if only it were not for Phyllis, who would bend every malicious energy to keep her younger sister from making such a good match.

"Lord knows, I'll be glad when Phil is married and settled down, for I'll never have any peace of mind till that day," sighed the poor little widow, turning from the gate to re-enter the house.

But at that moment she heard the pounding of horse's hoofs along the macadamised road, and looking up, saw the manager of the farm, thundering along on a big black horse towards the gate.

"Oh, dear, there's Huntly Warner stopping here again, and his brow is as black as a thunder-cloud! I suppose he's coming to scold because I can't pay off the mortgage on the farm; but how can I ever save a penny while Phil dresses so extravagantly!" she groaned to herself, as the man threw himself from his horse at the gate.

"Good morning, Mr. Warner!" she exclaimed, looking shrinkingly at the big, dark, frowning fellow, who appeared to be about thirty-five years old, and was neatly dressed in a grey summer suit, with a pretentious gold chain swung across his vest.

"Good morning, Mrs. Stuart. By the way, who was that riding tandem with that toff Denver? Surely not little Hilda!"

"Yes, sir; little Hilda. Oh, there was no harm. He is going to take her to the picnic with Phil and the other girls. You know, she has no bike of her own."

"Then she shall have one, for this must not happen again!" stormed Huntly Warner, following her back to the house.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. STUART gazed in wonder at the angry manager, wondering what he could mean by his loud talk about her daughter; but he soon enlightened her, for when they were seated in the large, airy sitting-room opposite each other, he continued, curtly—

"Now, you are wondering why I made that remark. Very well, I object to Denver's attentions to Hilda, because I intend to marry her myself."

"You—marry—my Hilda!" she gasped, astonished and indignant.

"Yes; your Hilda!" he mimicked, growing dull red through his bronze, feeling her secret scorn. "Ain't I a good match for the girl? I'm rich, and she is as poor as poverty. I suppose you look down on me because I'm employed by you to manage your farm; but I'll give that up when I marry Hilda. In fact, I am rich enough to live without work, and I only took this position to get you in my power."

"In your power—why?" she gasped.

"Because I wanted Hilda—that is why. Yes, as long as four years ago when she was only a child of twelve I saw how beautiful she was, and determined to marry her when she grew up. But I knew how proud you were, and that you would never give either of your girls to your first husband's farm hand, rough and uncouth as I used to be, though since I inherited money I have improved in every way, and am looked up to in the whole neighbourhood, and you can't deny it."

"No," she murmured, faintly.

"So," he continued, roughly, "I fell in love with Hilda, and set about for a way to get her. The farm was going to rack and ruin with your poor management and Phil's extravagance, so I answered your advertisement for a manager, and

I've really done well by you; but you had mortgaged the farm already, so I bought up the mortgage, and—well, you can never raise the money to pay it—so unless you give me bonny Hilda, I shall foreclose it directly and leave you homeless!"

The wicked menace was out, and they glared at each other—the man coarse, cruel, triumphant, the woman dazed, fearful, almost fainting.

He continued, curtly—

"I don't want to distress you, but I must have Hilda. Give her to me and I'll make you a present of the mortgage, and you and Phil will be sure of a home for life, for I'll look after the property and see that it's not frittered away again; but refuse, and out you all go in a month into the street to earn your own bread."

"Have mercy!" she groaned. "Hilda is only a child yet!"

"Paul Denver did not seem to think so," he returned, grinding his teeth at the remembrance of how the pair had ridden away together, Hilda smiling over her shoulder into his face.

"You are too old for her," sobbed the poor mother.

"I am only thirty-five; and if I were twice that age I intend to have her for my wife, since I am in a position to dictate terms," grimly.

"But I tell you, Huntly Warner, she will never consent. You must have seen that she dislikes you."

"That only makes me more anxious. I shall enjoy taming the little shrew."

The mother trembled at the bare idea, and answered, with feeble defiance—

"Perhaps you cannot dictate terms so readily. If this rich young man falls in love with Hilda he may marry her and lend me the money to pay off the mortgage."

The man grew ghastly with rage and snarled: "Perhaps so; but a flirtation by the brook-side doesn't always come to marriage."

"What do you mean, Huntly Warner?" she gasped, indignantly.

"Just what I say—that Hilda has been meeting the fellow down by the brook, flirting with him. If he had any real respect for her, wouldn't he call on her at her home, instead of meeting her in the wood? No, he won't marry her, nor will I either, unless you stop her gallivanting! To-morrow evening I'll come for your answer, and if it is yes, I want to marry Hilda in a month. If it is no, I'll foreclose the mortgage in a month, as I said awhile ago. Good morning," and he flung out of the house as abruptly as he had entered it.

Meanwhile, Denver and Hilda had reached the bridge just as the party, impatient of delay, were about to start without them.

Indeed, only the entreaties of Bertha Forbes had prevented them from going ten minutes ago.

"Do let us wait a little longer for Paul. He is sure to be here directly," she declared, for a keen suspicion had flashed into her mind.

She remembered how earnestly he had said last night—

"How would you like for me to bring little Hilda to the picnic!"

And this morning he had surprised her by setting off so early on his bike, and saying he had ordered a new one.

The thought flashed over her now.

"It is for Hilda. They will be coming directly."

She wondered, with a swift glance at Phyllis, how she would take it.

She saw the young girl standing by her bicycle, gazing wistfully down the road, and felt almost sorry for the disappointment she felt was in store for her presently.

A few minutes later some one cried out:

"There he comes!"

"No, it is a she!" laughed another, and the next minute several shouted:

"A tandem!"

And sure enough, it was a bright new tandem, with the prettiest girl in the world in front, and Paul Denver sitting behind driving, his eyes shining with joy and pride.

They looked, they wondered, they gazed

again, and then they shouted with surprise and delight:

"Little Hilda! Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

Only one voice was silent. Phyllis Waring stood like one stricken dumb, surprise and rage struggling for mastery in her breast.

It was the greatest surprise she had ever had in her life, and the bitterest one.

And the worst of it all was that she could not vent her anger on Hilda, as she would be sure to do when they were alone again, but must smile and seem to be pleased like the rest.

All the young people were fond of Hilda, who had always been the little pet of the school, and they all knew that Phyllis was not fond of her lovely half-sister, though they little dreamed to what lengths her hate and jealousy would carry the envious girl.

After giving Hilda as rousing a welcome as if she had been a young queen, they all formed in line and set out to the picnic-grounds, a young merchant riding by the side of Phyllis; but even this triumph over the other girls did not soother her burning heart, torn with jealousy of Hilda riding so gaily with handsome, devoted Paul Denver.

Phyllis asked herself in amazement how it had all come about—Hilda's acquaintance with Paul, and their coming together this morning.

"They have certainly been very shy about it, very! I wonder if mamma was in the plot! If she was, I shall make her pay dearly for it," thought the cruel, vindictive girl.

So she did not enjoy the day, though it was one of the fairest of the summer; the sky so blue and sunny, without the slightest cloud, the breeze balmy, the green fields all a-flower, and the little birds trilling love songs on every bush and tree. Her heart was too heavy with its burden of jealous love.

Meanwhile, Paul and Hilda were getting acquainted with all the rapidity possible to a pair of lovers riding on a bicycle built for two, and Phyllis realized it with a secret fury impossible to describe. Yet she had to act her part all day, smiling and chatting with the others as if she bore the lightest heart in the world.

When they reached their destination and dismounted, Phyllis joined Paul and Hilda, rallying them gaily on the surprise they had given her.

"I didn't even know that you two were acquainted; but I am glad that Hilda got a chance to come to the picnic," she said, so genially that she imposed on both, and they thought they had wronged her in thinking she would be angry.

But Phyllis had come to a sudden determination, that by some plan or other she would out Hilda, and ride home with Paul on the tandem.

So she stuck to the pair, spoiling their pleasure as much as she could, and bringing all her fascinations to bear on the secretly disgusted Paul, who thought, ruefully:

"Why can't she see that 'two's company, three's none,' and leave us alone to enjoy ourselves!"

But he had no such luck until quite late in the afternoon, when Huntly Warner suddenly appeared on the scene, and presently managed to get Phyllis off by herself under the shade of a tree. She was vexed, but she dared not show her impatience, for she did not want him to foreclose the mortgage or withdraw his favour until she was safely married to some rich young man. Then she did not care what happened to her mother and sister.

Huntly was not one to beat about the bush, so presently he became quite confidential with Phyllis, and told her of his interview with her mother.

"I saw that she didn't want to give me Hilda; but maybe you're more sensible and will help me," he said, hopefully, understanding well her selfish nature.

Phyllis was simply overjoyed at the prospect of paying off the mortgage so easily. To do so she was willing to sacrifice any one but her own self.

"Of course I will help you. It is a splendid chance for Hilda!" she exclaimed.

"I knew you would think so, Phyllis; but your mother declared that she hoped Denver would be willing to marry Hilda, and pay off the mortgage for her sake," he said, artfully.

"Mamma said that, did she? Well, I'll pay her out for it!" thought the angry girl; but aloud she answered:

"Well, he certainly appears to have fallen in love with Hilda, and if you are to ever marry her we had better devise some scheme at once to break off their further courting, or it will come about as mamma wished."

Warner stifled an oath between his strong, white teeth, and answered, eagerly:

"You are right. I would like to take her away from him this minute, if I only knew how, curse him!"

"I have a plan," began Phyllis, but stopped and laughed. "Look! fate is playing into our hands. There goes Bertha Forbes up the road with Denver on his tandem. She has been dying to try it all day, and has succeeded in getting him away from Hilda at last. Now let us go to her and tell her mamma has been taken suddenly very ill, and sent for us to come at once. I will act sedulously—the usual rôle for me—and say it is only one of her headaches, and I won't go. Hilda will be frightened, and I'll tell her to take my bike and go home now, and I'll come later in the carriage with the chaperons. After that, trust me," maliciously, "to keep them apart."

Phyllis thought herself a very clever schemer, as indeed she was; but the love-making she intended to forestall had progressed already much further than she had suspected.

Paul Denver had dreamed all night of the little beauty he had met by the brook, and his first waking thought was of her lovely face.

"She's the girl for me. Heaven made her for me. I could not love her any better if I had known her five years, and I shall pretty soon let her know it, too, and dare my fate," he said to himself, with the enthusiasm of an ardent and impatient lover.

And when he saw her again that morning he thought she was more charming than ever, and just the girl to wear his name and ring.

On the way to the picnic grounds he kept purposely a little behind the others, so that they could converse with each other unheard, and with every mile of the way the happy pair plunged more deeply into love, Hilda turning her face over her shoulder to smile at him often, while their glances met and mingled in shy rapture beyond all telling.

So when they had only a mile further to go, Paul's feelings broke bounds, and he exclaimed—

"Do you feel as I do, Hilda, as if we had known each other for years? Bertha and I were talking about you last night, and she said you were the sweetest girl in the world, and that she wished someone would marry your selfish sister, and let you have a chance to enjoy your life."

"Bertha is always so sweet and kind to me," she murmured, blushing.

"Is she? Then how would you like to have her for your cousin?" ingratiatingly.

"But that could never be, you know."

"Oh, yes; easily. Do you want me to explain? Take me for a husband, little Hilda, and then you and Bertha would be cousins."

"Oh!"

"Isn't it easy? Say now, dear, will you do it? Will you marry me? I know this is sudden, but I've been trying to make you love me ever since I met you yesterday and fell in love with you on the spot."

Her blushing face was turned away, but Paul pedalled along very slowly, letting the crowd get almost out of sight, to gain time for his wooing, as he continued—

"I believe that love at first sight is the only true and lasting love. When two hearts rush together so, it is because Heaven intended them for each other. Yesterday, when I first saw you resting on the green, mossy bank by the brook, my heart leaped to you, and the whole world seemed to grow more beautiful and bright. I feared you would think me impertinent for lingering beside you, but you charmed me so, I could not tear myself away. I longed to take

you in my arms and kiss away the tears from your beautiful blue eyes. I would have ordered a hundred bicycles for you on the spot if you would have accepted them, and as soon as you left me, I rushed to the nearest telegraph office, and ordered this tandem, thinking we might have many a lovely spin together. Shall we, dearest? Or am I wrong in hoping that you—perhaps—might care for me just a little?" humbly, tenderly, his voice trembling with his heart's emotion.

And all at once, by the light of his tender words, the girl came to know all the meaning of yesterday's subtle joy and pain—the thrills of pleasure, the reluctance to part from him, the sweet dreams of the night, the longings for the morrow. It was love, sweet love!

Thrilled with emotion, but too shy to answer, she drooped her head, and the lover sighed.

"You are angry with me!"

"Oh, no, no!" falteringly.

"But you will not answer my pleadings—you will not give me any hope of winning you! Ah, Hilda, do you then love someone else?"

"I will confess it—yes!"

The word fell cold as ice upon his heart.

"A rival!" he cried, bitterly. "Ah, would that I dare ask his name!"

"You may—it is my mother," she whispered, demurely, and turned her face to look at him over her shoulder, her blue eyes brimful of happy laughter.

"Hilda!" reproachfully,

"Well, sir."

"How dare you frighten me so, trying to make me jealous of your mother. Is there no one else you love?"

"Only you!" softly.

"My darling!" and before she could turn away her rosy face he had stolen a rapturous kiss.

So they rode upon the picnic grounds pledged lovers, though Hilda whispered—

"Promise not to tell anyone just yet—not till we are better acquainted. I will not have Phyllis and the other girls saying I was easily won—that I 'jumped at the first chance.'"

"Very well, my darling. I will keep silence as you wish, but I shall court you furiously for a month, then tell everyone we're engaged, may I?"

"Ye-es," she faltered; and then they were on the picnic grounds, and everyone could see that the furious courting he threatened had fairly begun.

Perhaps there were jealousies and heart-burnings, for a number of the girls had had their private hopes of "Bertha's rich cousin;" but if there was one among them more welcome to the prize than another it was surely Hilda Stuart whom everyone loved, though many curious eyes sought Phyllis's face to see how she was taking her sister's triumph.

But they could not see that the proud beauty was the least affected. She did not wear her heart upon her sleeve, she was busy planning vengeance.

So when her chance came she carried her programme out, as she had told Huntly Warner, she would do—both acting their parts so cleverly that Hilda was completely deceived.

"Oh, Phil, we ought to go at once," she half-sobbed, clasping her little hands in alarm for the mother she dearly loved.

Phyllis tossed her proud dark head, replying obstinately—

"It was downright mean in mamma sending for us like this before the picnic was hardly half over, for they are talking of not going home till the moon rises. I don't intend to go. I dare say it's just one of her tiresome headaches."

"Indeed it is worse than that, and I think one of you girls at least ought to go home to the poor sick woman, who might be dead before you can get there."

"Oh, I will go at once!" sobbed Hilda, then she added, in dismay: "But how shall I get home? My escort is not here. He has taken his cousin to ride."

"If you are determined to go, Hilda, you may take my bicycle, and I'll come home to-night in



"AHEN!" COUGHED PAUL DENVER, ADVANCING, AND THE DOG GROWLED, AND THE GIRL STARTED.

the carriage with the chaperons," Phyllis said, artfully.

"Very well, then; but I think you ought to come too, Phil, to poor mamma."

She was turning away, but a sudden thought struck her, and looking back she said, blushing warmly,—

"Will you please make my excuses to Mr. Denver for not waiting to return with him?"

"Yes; I'll tell him how it was, and he will think you a little angel for going, and me a heartless girl for remaining; but I can't believe that mamma is as sick as Mr. Warner thinks," returned Phyllis, carelessly.

"You will be sorry by to-morrow that you did not believe me," that gentleman returned, lugubriously, as he followed Hilda to help her mount her bike, saying: "Go as fast as you can, Hilda, for she needs you badly, and I'll get on my horse and bring the doctor immediately."

The graceful little figure was soon out of sight round a curve of the mountainous road, and then Phyllis laughed gleefully at the success of her ruse.

"How easily the soft-hearted little thing fell into the trap!" she thought. "But, after all, it wasn't such a deception; for if Huntly Warner really told mamma all he says she will be quite ill with grief and trouble, and is sure to have one of her dreadful nervous headaches."

She was most impatient for the return of Paul Denver, and when he came within an hour, she drew him aside, saying, gently,—

"You are looking for Hilda, but she has gone home. Come sit with me under that tree, where no one can hear us, and tell me why."

Full of wonder and surprise, he followed; and when they were sitting side by side on the green grass, with the cool breeze blowing in their faces, she lifted her bright dark eyes to him and said, with apparent frankness,—

"I am very, very glad that you were away just now when Hilda's jealous lover came, for there might have been a scene between you."

His handsome face paled as he exclaimed,—

"I really do not understand you."

"I shall have to explain. But tell me first, how long have you known Hilda?"

"Only since yesterday. I happened to meet her down at the brook where I was fishing, and, to tell the truth, rather forced my acquaintance upon her. She seemed such a winsome little thing."

Phyllis almost choked with rage, but she forced a smile as she continued,—

"Hilda is a sad little flirt; but I dare say she did not realise that she did wrong in coming here with you to-day."

"Wrong! And why, please? I had the consent of her mother," exclaimed the young man, sharply.

"Yes, I know. Hilda can persuade mamma into anything when I am not by to keep her from it. But all the same, mamma knew she was doing wrong, and that Hilda's betrothed would be angry when he found out the truth."

"Hilda's betrothed?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. Did you not know that she is engaged to marry Huntly Warner, the manager of our farm? It has been an understood thing, ever since Hilda was twelve years old, that he was to have her as soon as she was grown, and the wedding is to come off in a month. Mr. Warner is as jealous as a Turk, and when he went to Cloverdale at noon and found that Hilda had come here with you he followed her in a fury, and there was quite a scene between them, I assure you. He scolded Hilda bitterly for her flirting, and she wept and promised him never to have anything to say to you again. The upshot of it was that she came to me and begged for my bicycle to go home alone on, and for me to tell you her mamma was sick and had sent for her, and she hoped you would be willing to bring me home on your bike."

She could see how she was hurting him by the deadly pallor of his face and the dimness of his eyes. His own voice sounded strange to him as he muttered,—

"Miss Waring, I can scarcely believe this story you have told me. It cannot be true."

Phyllis looked hurt, as she answered,—

"I'm sorry you doubt my word, but you may ask Hilda herself, or Mr. Warner, or mamma. Of course no one else knows it yet, because Hilda is so coquettish she wanted it kept secret till the last, so it would not interfere with her having other lovers."

(To be continued.)

PEAR TREES are much longer-lived than apple-trees. It is rare to see an apple-tree one hundred years old; but pear-trees twice, and even thrice that age, and still in full bearing, are common enough. They grow also to a much larger size than apple-trees, and a pear-tree two hundred years of age has quite the appearance and dimension of a forest tree.

By a new process, bricks are to be made from sand. The materials, which are mainly powdered stone and sand, are held together by a preparation which acts as a bond during the annealing process, which is conducted under a very high temperature. Various advantages are claimed for these new bricks. They are much stronger, having a crushing strength of as high as forty-five thousand pounds to the square inch, a cost of about three-fifths of ordinary brick, much less time required in their manufacture, and a great reduction in the quantity of fuel needed in their burning. With these advantages, there are likely to be brick-yards springing up wherever there is a demand for first-class building materials that can be furnished at a reasonable price. Brick and stone houses are by many persons liked better than wood; but brick and stone are more expensive and, therefore, out of the reach of the many who would prefer them. If sand can be made into bricks a great building problem is solved in a manner eminently satisfactory.



"DID YOU EVER MEET MY ELDER SISTER?" ASKED DENIS, AS HE SIPPED HIS TEA.

THE TRIALS OF HERMIONE.

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CHAPTER IX.

WHEN the girl who called herself Mary Brown agreed to go as companion to Mrs. Carlyon, she never realized the difficulties of her position, or how trying she would find it to hear her own story discussed without betraying herself.

She had taken a strange fancy to Mrs. Nairn, and had been long enough at the Hostel to discover that companionship were hard to find. This and a vague feeling that she should be safer from James Clifford's pursuit with the one family he had known her to rail against were the chief reasons which induced Hermione to go to Harley-gardens.

Then, too, it was only a temporary engagement. Surely in the two or three months she was with Mrs. Carlyon she could avoid any meeting with anyone who had known her before.

There is an old hymn of Dr. Watts' some of us—or our parents—were familiar with in nursery days, which observes,—

"Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive."

and Hermione was destined to learn the truth of this before she had been many days in Brighton, for Mrs. Carlyon spoke openly of her son's return to England, and his wish that she should spend some time with him at Carlyon. Here at the outset was a difficulty. Hermione could not return to her childhood's home as "Mary Brown;" yet if she refused, without any reason, to accompany her employer, that lady would think her capricious and ungrateful, and perhaps refuse the reference, to gain which had been one of the girl's chief objects in coming to Brighton.

"What do you think of my selection, mother?" asked Janet Nairn, coming in one afternoon when the companion was out on some errand for Mrs. Carlyon. "Don't you think I showed good taste?"

"I like Miss Brown very much," said Mrs. Carlyon, slowly, "but—"

"I knew there was a 'but' coming by your very tone. What is it mother? Isn't she bright enough for you? When I first saw her I fancied she had had some dreadful trouble, and I felt you would enjoy petting and comforting her."

"She is a dear little thing," said Mrs. Carlyon, simply, "and I am growing very fond of her; but, Janet, she has been here a fortnight, and I know no more of her than the first day she came. She never mentions her past; she never writes a letter or receives one; she seems to be utterly friendless and alone in the world."

"She told me she was an orphan," replied Janet. "Perhaps she was brought up in an asylum, and never had a home; but, mother, you know I told her you only wanted a companion while Kate was in America. It will be easy to make a change later if you think Miss Brown too secretive."

"She has a right to her own secrets," said Mrs. Carlyon, "only I should like to help her. Sometimes I can tell from her face when we meet at breakfast that she has been crying half the night."

"She is sure to confide in you soon," said Janet. "Perhaps it is a love trouble—only I can't fancy any man not being true to such a girl. She is simply beautiful, I think."

It was soon after this that Mrs. Carlyon decided after all not to go to London to meet Denis on his return. She said smilingly she thought she was too old for hotels and boarding houses, and Brighton was so near town that however busy he was her son could spend some time with her and run up for the day when he was obliged.

"Are you disappointed, Miss Brown," she asked her companion kindly. "Were you looking forward to a little stay in London?"

"I had far rather be here," Hermione said, frankly. "I never cared for London, and now it would only remind me of the dreary weeks I spent at the Hostel writing letters to everyone

who advertised for any services I thought in my power."

"I confess I like my own home best," said Mrs. Carlyon; "and here I see Janet and the babies nearly every day. If Kate had been at home I should have gone to London. Denis does not quite like some of her pursuits, and I should not have wanted them to clash; but as things are you and I will stay quietly in Brighton, Miss Brown, and Denis must spend as much time here as he can spare."

"Is he so very busy?" asked her companion. "I thought a nobleman did nothing but amuse himself."

Mrs. Carlyon laughed.

"Denis is an author, and that in itself is an engrossing profession. Then there will be a great deal of business connected with the estate to see to. We have never seen the cousin from whom he inherited of late years, but his lawyer is an old friend of ours, and he says there will be a great deal to attend to."

Hermione could well believe it; she knew that her father had neglected every duty of his position, and that though (as she understood now) by the deed of settlement which ended the old lawsuit he had been compelled to spend a certain sum on the estate, he had reduced it as much as possible, and taken no interest in lands or farms, cottages or tenant-farmers, thus there would be plenty of work for his successors.

"Will Lord Carlyon live on his estate?" she asked, anxious to settle a point on which her own stay with his mother largely depended.

Mrs. Carlyon smiled.

"He will spend part of every year there. He wanted me and Kate to make our home at Carlyon, but for many reasons I do not think that would answer. My eldest daughter is not suited to a country life, and I should not like to break up this house and so leave her without a home; besides," and the gentle face broke into a smile, "the rightful mistress of a man's house is his wife, and not his mother. Denis is thirty-three, and it is high time he was married."

"Marriage is a lottery," said Miss Brown so gravely that Mrs. Carlyon decided it must be a love trouble which depressed her after all. "If people are rich and can afford a wife they don't seem in a hurry to try their fate; if they have not quite enough for one they always think it plenty for two."

"I believe you are right," agreed Mrs. Carlyon. "My second son married on less than three hundred a year, and now he has four children; they are the only Carlyons of their generation."

"Then there is no fear of the name being extinct," said Miss Brown, cheerfully.

A telegram from Southampton announced Lord Carlyon's safe arrival there, and that he hoped to be in Brighton late on the following day. Mr. Norton had met him on landing, and they had a great deal to discuss.

"Among others that horrible man, I hope," said Janet Nairn, who happened to be in Harley-gardens when the wire came. "If I were Denis I should make short work of Mr. James Clifford."

Hermione who was pouring out tea, almost dropped the milk jug in her dismay. Mrs. Carlyon, who had a gracious, kindly way of trying to include her companion in the conversation, said, quietly,—

"Miss Brown will think you are very vindictive, Janet."

"I expect Miss Brown has heard of family skeletons before now," said Janet, pleasantly. "The truth is," turning to the companion, "we have only one relation apart from our own immediate family; we all meant to be very fond of her when her father died, but she would have nothing to do with us, and married a man who had been secretary to Lord Carlyon, but who—

Mr. Norton declares—was originally nothing but a billiard marker at a country hotel."

"Quite a *mésalliance*," said Hermione, wishing her cheeks did not burn so.

"That's not the worst of it," said Miss Nairn, "from her wedding-day no human creature has set eyes on Hermione."

"My dear," reproved her mother, "you must not speak so rashly; you have no proof of what you say."

"Well, mother, you know what Mr. Norton says. He has had half a dozen letters from Hermione, some written by herself others, penned at her dictation; they all say she is very ill and only a winter in the sunny south can save her, she demands a large sum of ready money for the expenses, which Mr. Norton is to advance from the estate, and no doubt when Lord Carlyon returns he will settle an ample allowance on his cousin. Well, Miss Brown, Hermione Carlyon is represented by her old friends as one of the proudest girls imaginable. She had told Mr. Norton before her marriage nothing would induce her to accept a shilling from my brother, so naturally he was amazed at her change of front."

"He has called in Essex-street (the address given in the letter) repeatedly, only to be told Hermione is too ill to see him. He has offered to interview the doctor on the subject of the necessary trip to Cannes, but is only told the doctor is too busy to waste time on needless discussions."

"It sounds a strange story," observed Miss Brown, seeing that some remark was expected of her.

"I don't believe it," said Mrs. Nairn, firmly. "I think Hermione (I hate to call her Mrs. James Clifford), knows nothing whatever of the letters written in her name, I can't believe a Carlyon would stoop to begging letters."

"Poor thing!" said Hermione, slowly. "I should fancy she regretted her marriage."

"My own fear," said the gentle lady of the house, "is that the poor girl is dead. I don't believe Mr. Clifford could go so far as to write these letters in her name if she were alive, the danger would be so great. If she discovered his scheme she could so easily write and disavow it."

"Dead!" repeated Janet, sadly. "Oh, mother, Hermione can't be dead; she is only twenty—

younger than I am!"

"My dear," said Mrs. Carlyon, "think what a failure she has made of her life. . . . I would not for worlds say one unkind word of her; but I should think, for her own sake, those who loved

Hermione best, would rather think of her as at rest for ever than tied to such a man as James Clifford!"

Mrs. Carlyon's companion sat up in her own room that night long after the usual hour for retiring. Hermione felt more bewildered than she had ever done in her life before. On the one hand a cruel fraud was being attempted on Lord Carlyon; money was to be extracted from him in her name, and the bare idea was odious to her; but on the other—how could she stop it without giving anyone the clue to her present whereabouts?

Hermione was proud still. All she had gone through since her father's death had embittered rather than softened her pride. She could not bring herself to confess the truth to Mrs. Carlyon; she could not bear to go to her employer and say,—

"I am the girl you pity! I implore you, help me to hide myself from my husband."

No; she could not do that.

If she wrote to James Clifford, telling him if he did not at once cease his attempts on Lord Carlyon's purse, she should herself unmask him to her kinsman, she knew perfectly her husband would take no notice of the threat; and her very letter might give him a clue to her whereabouts.

If she wrote to Lord Carlyon saying Mrs. Tempest had no share in her husband's importunities, her note must, perforce, have the Brighton postmark, and might betray her.

She wondered if Miss Stanley, at the hotel, would post a letter to him in London, if she sent it under cover; but the attempt might prejudice the superintendent against her. What right motive (Miss Stanley might ask) could Mary Brown have for wishing to write privately to her employer's son? No; it really seemed that waiting was her only resource.

By the wording of his telegram Lord Carlyon was not expected in Harley-gardens much before the seven o'clock dinner, and his mother had gone off to an afternoon tea with a friend without the least fear of missing him. She left Miss Brown at home with an apology. The lady she was going to visit was in delicate health, and she did not like to take a stranger to her house unasked.

"I would much rather stay at home," said Miss Brown, frankly. "I always feel that people must think me dreadfully in the way when you take me anywhere. I have got a very exciting novel, and I mean to enjoy myself very much."

"I shall not be later than six, for I expect Denis will be here soon after half-past."

Before she devoted herself to her book, Miss Brown gave a few dainty touches to the drawing-room, watered the ferns, re-arranged the hot-house flowers in the quaint glass vases; then she stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, and settled herself cozily in a big arm-chair with the novel.

But either its interest flagged, or her own life-story was just then so near a crisis that she could not fix her attention on the printed page. Soon she let the book sink to the rug, and with her beautiful eyes fixed on the glowing embers of the fire she gave herself up to thought.

What a pretty house this was, and how quietly and pleasantly existence flowed on here. Well, but for her own wilfulness, Harley-gardens might have been her rightful home. Mrs. Carlyon had sent a message by Mr. Norton, on her father's death, begging her to come there for as long as suited her. The lawyer had given her plainly to understand the new Lord Carlyon wished to provide for her as a sister of his own; and she had preferred to marry James Clifford. She had chosen Essex-street, and the mother-in-law, who looked like a charwoman, in preference to Harley-gardens and gentle Mrs. Carlyon.

She had been an idiot.

She had reached this point in her reflections when the door was opened abruptly, and the parlour-maid (a new-comer) announced Lord Carlyon with an air of having a personal interest in a titled visitor.

Hermione started up, the strange, regretful expression still in her eyes, her cheeks pinker from their long vicinity to the fire, and on her face a look of such unequivocal dismay that Denis

could do no less than take the onus of explanation on himself.

"I am Mrs. Carlyon's son. She was expecting me to-day, I think," and he put out his hand. "You must be Miss Brown!"

Hermione shook hands with him, and admitted to herself it was a good face enough. Her calm, self-possession was fast returning.

"I am Mrs. Carlyon's companion. She did not expect you till half-past six, and has gone to tea with a Mrs. Fox. Would you like to join her there, or shall I send word to her you have come?"

"Neither please," and Denis smiled. "Mrs. Fox is my own particular aversion, and mother would have her visit there quite spoilt if the news descended on her I had arrived too soon. Perhaps," and he looked at the tray of silver and china then coming in, "you will let me have tea with you? It is past five, so mother will not be long."

The maid lighted the big floor lamp. Its voluminous pink silk shade shed a rosy hue over everything. Hermione busied herself with the tea-things, and Denis Lord Carlyon sat down opposite her as composedly as though he had just returned from a walk instead of a prolonged sojourn at the Antipodes.

"I don't think you have been with my mother long, Miss Brown!" he said, presently; "but, perhaps, you can tell me if she is as well as usual? I was afraid she would take my sister's American tour to heart."

"I think she did at first," confessed Hermione. "After I came she said two or three times that she must have made her daughter unhappy for her to be so glad to leave her; but Mrs. Nairn used to cheer her up, and say women with a mission never cared for home; and now I think she has quite got over it."

"Did you ever meet my elder sister?" asked Denis, as he sipped his tea.

"Never!"

"If you had I think you would understand her companionship is not a great loss. She is a good woman and a clever one; but a most uncomfortable person to live with. Janet and I always used to feel it a kind of high festival when she was away from home."

"She is coming back after Easter," said Hermione, composedly; "but she writes that she can't live in Brighton. She must be near headquarters. Mrs. Carlyon can't tell what she means by that."

"London, probably. London is the headquarters of every Socialistic movement."

"Is Miss Carlyon a Socialist?"

"I never could understand what she was," confessed Denis. "I only know her views on every subject are different to other peoples. If I were mother I should let her set up a flat in London, and a latchkey."

"Did you like Australia?" asked Hermione, politely, after searching her mind fruitlessly for a safe subject.

"That's a big question, Miss Brown. I only saw a part of one colony. I liked that; and for genuine hospitality I never saw the like of the Colonials. I should have stayed out there another year but for business matters."

Hermione winced. He could sum up what had made the tragedy of her whole life in those two words—business matters.

"I have often thought," she said, dreamily, "there must be something delightful in a long sea voyage—just to feel that for six or seven weeks you are cut off absolutely from all news of the outer world; it must be perfect."

"I am afraid you dislike your fellow-creatures very much, Miss Brown, he said, smiling; "and at the voyage's end you get all your worries in a big budget; you forget that!"

"All the same I should like to try," said Hermione. "When Miss Carlyon comes home, and I have to look out for another situation, I would like to get on in Australia."

"You would find the life rather rough if you went up country," said Denis; "but there is a delicious sense of space and freedom if you can put up with a few drawbacks."

"Do you know," said Hermione, who felt far more at ease with Lord Carlyon than she had ex-

pected, "you speak almost as if you regretted having left Australia!"

"I don't regret that exactly," he answered, smiling; but for the last few years I have led a delightfully free wandering life, and now that it has come to an end and I must settle down to a humdrum stay-at-home existence I feel a little down."

The companion opened her eyes.

"Most people would think yours a most enviable fate. To be Lord Carlyon, of Carlyon, a county magnate!"

"Ah, but then you see I am not ambitious; and I fancy when men care very much about money and rank it is for the sake of some one dear to them, and not for their own. Now my mother and Janet won't feel the least elated at my promotion. They will be glad for me, but it won't do them personally a bit of good; and it all seems a pity."

When Mrs. Carlyon came in in a flutter of regret at her absence, Miss Brown wondered whether she would think her companion presumptuous for attempting to entertain her son, and made her escape as quickly as possible.

"You are looking wonderfully well, Denis. I can't help feeling glad that you have come into your own at last," and the mother put her hand proudly on his shoulder.

Denis sighed.

"I don't suppose a man ever came into an inheritance with less pleasure, mother."

"But, dear, surely you are not brooding over the past; it is nearly six years ago, and—"

"And I ought to have got over Sylvia's falseness," he said, a little bitterly. "I suppose you are right; but the world has never seemed quite the same to me since."

Mrs. Carlyon looked more and more troubled.

"I suppose you saw the English papers while you were away, Denis," was her utterly irrelevant remark.

"Sometimes," he answered, lightly. "What are you thinking of, mother?"

"I wondered if you knew that Mr. Empson died in the summer. He failed suddenly, and, poor man, his ruin broke his heart. There was no settlement on Sylvia. He was so rich no one seemed to think of prudence when they were married. She is back in her father's house, and if your happiness is set on her, when her year of mourning is over, you might—"

But Denis interrupted her.

"I wouldn't marry Sylvia if there was not another woman in England. Mother, surely you don't think I am regretting her. What I mourn is my lost faith. My disappointment seems to have steeled my heart against all thoughts of love or marriage."

"I thought, perhaps, you would bring me home a colonial daughter. Australian girls are said to be very pretty."

"Some of them are very fascinating, but I did not fall a victim to their charms. I have not gained a *hancie* on my wanderings, mother; but something else which much perplexes me—a ward."

"A ward! Denis, you don't mean any one has made you guardian to their child? Why didn't you bring the poor little thing here to me?"

"There was a passenger on board the *Arcturion* who would confide in me," said Denis; "in the end he left me his whole fortune in trust for his half-sister. She was in England. The misfortune of it is, mother, that some one stole a few of his papers, and I can't ascertain the lady's surname or where she lived. All I know is that he was Donald Home, and his half-sister was called Lucy. She must be not far from forty now, though he thought of her only as the little child he left when he went to Australia."

"She would be too old for you," said Mrs. Carlyon, thoughtfully.

"Decidedly, but she has probably been married for years. Norton calls it a hopeless quest, and says that to advertise for the relations of Donald Home would only be to bring upon myself a host of false claimants."

"Is it much?—the money I mean?"

"I can't tell you the exact amount off-hand. It's safe in the keeping of an English bank, and

it is enough to make my ward a very rich woman."

"And if you cannot find her?"

"In the event of her death I am to retain half the fortune, the rest goes to charities."

"He must have understood you thoroughly,"

said Mrs. Carlyon—Mr. Home, I mean—to guess that the very knowledge you benefit by her death would make you more anxious to find his sister."

"You flatter me, mother."

"No, I don't. You and Nettie always had more heart than my other children. Kate is all brains, and Ronald's love seems confined now to his wife and children."

"I suppose the latter are as spoilt as ever!"

"Quite. Denis, you must marry if it is only to prevent Eliza teaching little Tom that he is to be Carlyon, of Carlyon."

CHAPTER X.

LORD CARLYON showed himself in no hurry to leave his mother's house. He purchased a season ticket for three months, and ran up to London two or three times a week; but he made Harley-gardens his headquarters, and seemed in no anxiety to take possession of the beautiful home in Westshire it had pained his cousin Hermione so much to leave. Of course, the papers which boasted a column about the doings of fashionable people recorded the return of Lord Carlyon and Mr. James Clifford, who had studied that special column for some days past, gave a sigh of relief.

"Luck's turned at last," he confided to his family, "that lawyer was much too crafty for me; but I knew a chap once who had seen a lot of Carlyon, and he told me he was an open-handed sort of fellow, and awfully soft about women and children."

"Well," said Jane, tartly, "it's a good thing he's come home then, for so far you haven't got much out of your grand marriage."

Mrs. Clifford wiped her eyes surreptitiously; she was one of those women whose tears are near the surface.

"She was a sweet pretty creature—your wife, Jim—and I always shall say that if you'd let me go up to her that night and hearten her up with a bit of supper and a few kind words, things would have turned out very different."

Jim muttered something which was understood to be "rot." Mrs. Clifford moaned on,—

"And it's my belief the poor young thing's dead, or we must have heard something of her in all this time—six weeks it must be."

"Seven," corrected Jane, the accurate.

"I don't think she's dead," said the missing girl's husband, as indifferently as though he had been speaking of a stranger's fate; "it's more likely she's gone to some of her fine friends. I never heard her mention any one she was intimate with, but her father lived abroad till she was seventeen, and it stands to reason she must have known people on the continent."

"She couldn't go to the continent without money," objected Jane.

"And money she had," retorted Jim. "I know she received three hundred pounds in hard cash from old Norton just before she left Carlyon; and when I made that unsuccessful try for the emeralds, I said my wife had left one of her trunks behind to 'draw' the housekeeper, but she replied Mrs. Carlyon took three large trunks and a Gladstone bag. Now, the bag we know she left behind her here, and there wasn't a coin in it. The three hundred pounds she must have packed in one of the boxes, and when she went off from here, she just collected her luggage and had plenty of money."

"I don't understand much about it," said Mrs. Clifford, in the troubled tone of a woman whose children have outgrown her intellect; "but I do hope, Jim, you won't go and do anything rash."

Jim looked at his second sister with a twinkle in his eye.

"You're so awfully careful, mother. If I should bring Lord Carlyon here next week,

wouldn't you like to go out somewhere for the day; you're such a shy old lady you'd not feel equal to entertaining a real live nobleman."

Poor Mrs. Clifford looked from Alice to Jim. Instinct told her there was far more in these simple words than she understood.

She felt bewildered and dismayed. Even Jane, on whom she generally relied implicitly, did not inspire her with complete confidence, as she remarked,—

"Yes, mother, that'll be the best place. You and I are not fine enough for a fashionable guest, we'll leave Alice and Jim to entertain his lordship."

At first James Clifford's plans received a check. Lord Carlyon was at Brighton, and in reply to a lengthy epistle from his cousin's husband replied, he preferred not to enter upon a long correspondence. He should be in London on the first of February, and would see Mr. Clifford at his chambers between ten and twelve.

The delay was inconvenient to Jim; but he could do nothing except put up with it. Fortunately at half-past ten on the appointed day he called on Denis, and was promptly ushered into his presence, Lord Carlyon giving his tenant a private intimation he was not at home to any one else until Mr. Clifford had departed.

The two young men glanced at each other a little keenly. Denis was agreeably surprised. He had formed his opinion of Hermione's husband entirely on Mr. Norton's information, quite forgetting that the lawyer, good worthy man though he was, was strongly biased against the ex-secretary, and also that to have been admitted to Lord Carlyon's domestic circle, and to have won his daughter's heart, Clifford could not be openly wanting, at least, in the usual externals of a gentleman.

Instead of the fast horse-looking young fellow he had expected Denis, saw a strikingly handsome man, well dressed, well set up, with the air of one used to good society; in short, the peer had to admit to himself that he would have met Clifford at the club without wondering how he gained his entrance there.

He put out his hand at once. Denis began to feel his visitor had been a little misjudged among them.

"I cannot quite understand why you have sought this interview, Mr. Clifford," he said, frankly. "Although your wife's distant cousin, she and I have never met; and I am given to understand she refused all overtures from my mother with the utmost scorn; therefore I cannot hope my own acquaintance would be welcome to her."

Jim smiled.

"Hermione is only twenty," he said, simply; "and till her father's death she had never known a trouble. He worshipped her, and kept every disagreeable subject from her. Though he knew perfectly all he had passed to you at his death, he let my poor girl grow up believing herself the heiress of Carlyon. She only heard the truth the day of his funeral, and she was half beside herself. Instead of understanding the arrangement had been made before she was born, she took it into her head that you (forgive me) had plotted to rob her of her inheritance; and she looked on Mrs. Carlyon's kind invitation as an insulting patronage. A wrong view of course, but she was only a child."

"And yet she was old enough to deceive her oldest friends, and to marry you unknown to them," said Carlyon, quietly.

"She deceived no one! There was no living creature who had any rightful authority of her. She had no intimate friends. A bachelor lawyer and a former governess, now keeping a boarding-house for City clerks, were the two people supposed to be in a position to advise her. I put it to you, could an orphan girl of twenty, of great beauty, have taken up her abode with Mr. Norton, or in the cheap pension kept by her old governess? We loved each other; we considered we had no one to consult. If our marriage was hurried, you must remember Hermione was absolutely homeless. Had I taken lodgings for her it would have created a scandal if I had visited her in them. To me it seemed best to give her the protection of my name at once.

Clifford is not a bad name, Lord Carlyon, although, I grant you, I have little but the name to be proud of."

Denis felt as though his preconceived ideas were all being knocked on the head. He had congratulated himself that Mr. Norton was in Ireland on professional business, and so he had Clifford to himself; but at this point of the interview, he would have given a great deal for the lawyer's company. James Clifford was far more gentlemanly than he had expected. His story was plausible—most plausible! But yet, somehow, his tone did not ring true.

"You have not told me yet why you have sought me out?" he said, gravely.

"I am coming to that. My married life has been one long chronicle of misfortunes. Hermione lost the bank-notes paid her by Mr. Norton on her way to London; of course she had no list of the numbers, and so it was impossible to trace them."

"Mr. Norton had the list," suggested Denis.

Mr. Clifford suffered this remark to pass unnoticed.

"It was of course a great change for her from the luxury of Carlyon to humble lodgings at Pimlico. She caught a chill, and it turned to inflammation of the lungs. She has been at death's door; the doctor tells me nothing will restore her to health but a change to a warmer climate."

"And, in plain English, you want me to provide the money?"

"In plain English," replied Clifford, "I do not think you will have any peace of mind amid the luxury of Carlyon, if you have to think of the late mistress of that grand old place slowly dying for want of a few comforts money could provide."

Carlyon liked him less. He fixed Jim with his eye, and felt certain the young man resented his scrutiny.

"You remind me pretty often that your wife has been accustomed to luxury; probably you have decided, in your own mind, the cost of the trip to Cannes!"

"I think a hundred pounds would do it," said Clifford, promptly. "And the lowest dowry you could offer to a daughter of the Carlyons would be five thousand pounds."

"I have a married sister, Mr. Clifford, also a daughter of Carlyon; she had no dowry at all!" Clifford looked a little discomfited.

"I have sacrificed the chances of several good appointments to nurse my wife; but I felt sure on your return you would settle an income on her, or find me some lucrative post."

"The last alternative I utterly refuse," said Denis. "I would never recommend a man of whom I knew so little as yourself."

Clifford's face was quite immovable.

"You own all that was her father's. I consider it your positive duty to settle a fixed allowance on my wife. I should prefer that indeed to a sum down as a dowry. With a certain income Hermione and I should be free from all pecuniary anxiety."

"I think you are the coolest customer I ever met," said Lord Carlyon. "Why should I help you because you have married a wilful girl who happens to be my second or third cousin?"

"You cannot help Hermione without also helping me. I am not inestable. Four or five hundred a year will be quite sufficient; of course with an understanding that it is for life."

"Does your wife know of this call of yours here to-day?"

"Yes."

"And its object?"

"Certainly."

"And yet I have heard her described as proud," said Denis, half to himself, but Clifford caught the words.

"When people are very weak and ill; when they long for brighter scenes and physical comforts they haven't much pride left, Lord Carlyon. Things have gone very badly with my wife since her father's death. She is altered so terribly I doubt if her old friends would recognise her."

"At least you have not given them the chance," said Lord Carlyon. "Norton told me

he had offered again and again to call on your wife."

"Yes," admits Clifford, "but she went into hysterics at the idea, and said it would bring back the thought of old times and all she had lost."

"Probably I should have an even more disquieting effect upon her," said Carlyon, "yet I do not feel disposed to make any pecuniary offer until I have seen her."

"You can see her when you please. This morning if convenient to yourself."

Carlyon felt at fault. If Clifford were not running straight, if his unfortunate wife were coerced into submitting to his demands on her kinsman, why, then, surely her husband would have wanted time to prepare and tutor her.

"Do I understand that if I return with you to Pimlico I can see Hermione at once?"

"Certainly, without a minute's delay. You can see her alone if you prefer it. She is on the drawing-room sofa this morning for the first time since her illness."

Carlyon's decision was taken. He would go, but he did not trust James Clifford, and his next remark showed this with almost brutal frankness.

"I will go with you to see your wife, but, Mr. Clifford, there are one or two things I had better say first. I can't make out your readiness for me to see Hermione when you would not accord that privilege to her old friend, Mr. Norton. Now, look here. I have heard that you are a desperate man, and that if you don't get money from me you will be ruined."

"That's true enough," said Jim, sullenly, "but it's rather insulting to mention it."

"Hear me out—you may fancy that if you lured me to your house and kept me in durance vile you would get a good round sum for my release. You may flatter yourself your wife is my heir-at-law. Well, listen to me. I am your only hope. If I were to die my brother would succeed me, and he regards every penny taken from his wife and children as mispent. You may get assistance from me; you won't get the value of a brass farthing out of Ronald."

James Clifford smiled.

"I assure you I have not the slightest design on your life or liberty. If it will be the least satisfaction to you we will drive to Essex-street in a four-wheeled cab and take your servant (the chap who admitted me) on the box. Then, if you don't come out of my house safe and sound within a given time, he can rouse the police."

"I am not a coward," said Denis, stiffly.

"No, you are only suspicious. You would feel more comfortable if you acted on my suggestion. Well, do. You can tell the man when you go in that if you don't come out in half an hour he is to knock at the door till he sees you, because you have to catch a train."

"I don't tell lies," said Denis. "I shall give no reason, but I will tell him to knock at the door if my visit exceeds twenty minutes. I am sure that is long enough to trespass on an invalid."

(To be continued.)

It has been a source of interest and wonder to Arctic explorers to find such quantities of singing birds within the Arctic circle. They are abundant beyond belief. But the immense crop of cranberries, crowberries and cloud-berries that ripen in the northern swamps account for the presence of the birds.

In the neighbourhood of the Bermudas the sea is extremely transparent, so that the fishermen can readily see the horns of lobsters protruding from their hiding-places in the rocks at considerable depth. To entice the crustaceans from these crannies they tie a lot of snails in a ball and dangle them in front of the cautious lobster. When he grabs the ball they haul him up.

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RUBY'S CHOICE.

—201—

"I WILL never marry Tom Silver! I detest his very name. Papa, I will do anything in the world for your sake, but I cannot consent to marry a man for his money."

Mr. Rowton smiled.

"Why, Ruby," he returned, laying his hand upon his daughter's golden head, "one would think Mr. Silver a perfect ogre, instead of a handsome, well-bred young man, as rich as Croesus! And you have never met him, my dear. How can you be so decided? Ruby, you are sadly prejudiced."

A wilful expression came into the girl's eyes, and a pretty blush crimsoned her smooth cheeks.

Very pretty indeed was Ruby Rowton; a rosy blonde, graceful, well educated, but very independent, and a trifle wilful. Had her father adopted a different course in the matter; had he simply introduced the young people and left them to their own devices, ten chances to one but they would have fallen desperately in love before the summer was half over, for Tom Silver's handsome estate joined the home of the Rowtons, and he would naturally meet Ruby frequently.

I suppose there never yet existed two young persons thrown constantly into each other's society in a retired country place, with no other social resource, who did not fall straightway in love with each other, and I doubt if these two would have proved the exception. But, man-like, Mr. Rowton had plunged directly into the matter, and doubtless spoiled what might have proved a love affair *en rigle*.

For, just the moment that Ruby discovered the state of affairs, that Mr. Silver, having seen her somewhere, had, without her knowledge or consent, become deeply infatuated with her beautiful face, and had begged Mr. Rowton the privilege of addressing his daughter, she rose in protest against such a summary disposal of herself; ending at last with a defiant burst of tears.

"I will never consent, papa," she wailed. "No; I will go and be a governess, and thus avoid meeting this gentleman."

And Mr. Rowton laughed merrily at the very idea, as he stooped to kiss her dimpled cheek. He saw his mistake now in speaking on the subject, and wisely determined to "let well enough alone" in the future.

He was already acquainted with Tom Silver, though Ruby had never met him, and he knew the young man to be good and honourable. Besides, he was very wealthy, and as the Rowtons were far from rich, this fact meant something to him. But he decided in the future to maintain a strict silence in regard to Mr. Silver.

Judge of his consternation when, a week before the time that the young man was expected to return to his home, Ruby announced her intention of going out as a governess.

"It's not far, papa," she pleaded; "only fifty miles from home; and I have already secured a school, and a nice little salary."

At first Mr. Rowton was very angry, but after a time prudence whispered to let her try the experiment, and perhaps, when she should tire of teaching, she would be willing to accede to his wishes.

So he consented, and one fair June morning Ruby, in a Great Western train, was hastening towards Glenhorpe, the scene of her future labours.

Arrived there, she was conducted to her home, with a wide gallery at front and rear, and half a dozen dogs in possession.

Mrs. Browe, the lady of the house, made her welcome, and after the first shock was over began to think that it would be no end of fun.

She began in the new Board School with great confidence in her untried abilities, and so time passed, and Ruby was fully launched into the fitful experiences of a teacher's life.

One evening, having dismissed her pupils, she lingered at her desk in the schoolroom, busy with the copybooks for the next day, when all at once a rushing and roaring sounded in her ears, and a great puff of black smoke flew in at the open

door. Rising hastily to her feet, Ruby discovered, to her horror and consternation, that the woods all around her were on fire!

Great walls of seething flame rose on every side, creeping nearer and nearer the school building, crackling and hissing, the long lurid flames, like fiery tongues, lapping up everything in their way.

Her heart stood still with terror. She saw at a glance, and understood intuitively, that she was surrounded by fearful peril. No one was aware that she had remained at the school, no one would seek her at that place, and there was no human habitation within a mile at least. And there, on every side, the great walls of red-hot, devouring flame arose, and she knew that it meant certain destruction.

She stood like a hunted creature at bay, her face pale as death, her eyes wild and dilated; while slowly the fearful flames crept nearer and nearer.

She crouched upon the floor at last, trembling like a leaf, in wordless horror. She shrieked aloud, and called wildly for help, but no one answered her—no one heard her. She closed her eyes.

"Heaven help me!" she whispered.

And then, through the rushing and roaring of the awful flames (Heaven must have heard and answered her prayer), she caught the sound of hurrying footsteps; a tall figure dashed in between the burning trees and tall grass, like banners of flame, and some one caught her in a pair of strong arms and bore her from the place.

She realised the fearful struggle against death itself which was before them in that fiery forest; her head drooped upon the man's shoulder, and she fainted dead away.

When she opened her eyes she was lying on the chintz-covered lounge in her landlady's room, and that lady herself, pale and anxious, was bending over her.

"Oh, dear Miss Rowton!" she cried, as Ruby's blue eyes opened with a wild look of terror in their depths, "I thought that you were dead! Thank Heaven, you've come to at last!"

Ruby sat up and glanced around her, while memory slowly struggled back.

"Where is he?" she faltered; "the man who saved my life—Mr. Townley! Oh, he's gone. The fire's out now, thank Heaven!" she added. "Who is this Mr. Townley?" queried Ruby, eagerly. "He was very brave to risk his life for me—a stranger too!"

Mrs. Brown smiled.

"Mr. Townley would do that for any one," she returned. "He's a mighty nice young man."

And when he had called to inquire after Ruby's health, and had passed an hour in her society, Ruby could not refrain from mentally endorsing Mrs. Brown's verdict.

One call brought about another. The school was burned to the ground, but Ruby continued her school in Mrs. Brown's front room, and, somehow, Mr. Townley got into the habit of calling every evening. The consequence was that, ere the summer was over, the two were betrothed, and Ruby had told her lover all about the obnoxious Mr. Silver.

"Marry me at once, Ruby darling!" pleaded the lover. "I am able to take care of you, and I will stand between you and the persecutions of this man. I will take you home to your father as soon as you are my wife, and we will tell him the whole story, and beg his pardon."

So well did he plead his cause that at last the girl consented; and one evening they entered the little country church not far distant, and when they came forth there was no more Ruby Rowton.

"Just as I expected!" exclaimed Mr. Rowton, welcoming his son-in-law with a cordial shake of the hand, "and you can thank me for the suggestion. I told you to follow her to the woods, and woo and win her *incog*. Let me see your marriage certificate, Ruby," he added, turning to his daughter. "You haven't looked at it yet yourself."

Greatly bewildered, Ruby glanced over her

father's shoulder as he opened the formidable-looking document in his hand.

"Ah, ha, little one!" laughed Mr. Rowton, gaily, "you've had your own way, yet you have obeyed your father after all!"

And, glancing for the first time at her marriage certificate, Ruby read her husband's name.

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CHAPTER XVI.—(continued.)

"I DON'T feel right about your going away, William, my son," she sobbed. "Something tells me that you should not go. I will never see you again as I see you now."

He tore himself from her clinging clasp, and kissing the white hands that would have held him back from ruin and destruction, mounted his horse and rode rapidly away.

Mrs. Jolly watched him out of sight through her tears.

"Your life is to be wrecked, my noble boy," she moaned, "and all for the love of a fair face."

The day came all too soon when her prediction and forebodings were to be realized.

But we must now return to Constance.

When she left the elegant home of the Jollys, she had bent her footsteps in the direction of the station.

The train had just left, but she found upon inquiry that several London trains passed the junction, which was eight miles below.

"I have not much money to spend for riding; I will walk the distance," Constance told herself, bravely.

The sun went down and the dusk crept up and began to deepen into the darkness of a starless night, still Constance kept on her way through the dark woods. Her feet were weary and sore; but her heart was still more weary.

Utterly exhausted, she sunk down upon a fallen log by the wayside to rest, and her thoughts reverted to Lexmore Hall and its occupants.

She had read, the previous day, in a morning paper at the Doctor's, the following paragraph among the personals:

"Mr. H. Lexmore, son of the late Major Lexmore, of Oakdale, is about to close his palatial country seat, known as Lexmore Hall, and is about to travel abroad, for the present year at least. He will be accompanied by his—"

The paper was torn here, but to Connie's excited fancy the remainder of the sentence was easily supplied: "He will be accompanied by his wife;" for, of course, he had married Winnie Kinder ere this, she told herself, now that the shackles of that abhorred betrothal had fallen from him, as he must have believed, by her supposed death in the rapids. He loved Winnie, not her. She had come between them, and he hated her for it.

It were better that he believed her dead—yes, a thousand times better so. She would never cross his path again—his and Winnie's. And she bowed her beautiful head over the crimson creepers that grew in rich luxuriance over the mossy log upon which she sat, watering them with bitter tears.

A sharp crackling of the dry twigs a few yards ahead of her startled Connie, and with a little suppressed cry, she drew back into the dense shadow of the alder bushes hard by, but not a moment too soon, for advancing scarcely twenty feet from her, she beheld, by the faint light of the young moon, the figures of two men, one of whom she recognised instantly as that of George Grenfell.

For an instant Connie's heart seemed to stand still, and she fancied that her cruel enemy, with whom she had been brought so suddenly and unexpectedly almost face to face, must hear the loud, terrified beating of her heart.

"We will sit down here upon this fallen log and talk the matter over," said Grenfell, indicating the seat upon which Connie had sat but a moment previous, and so near her that she could

have put out her white hand from where she stood, cowering and shrinking back among the alder bushes, and touched him.

"The London train will never reach the station two miles yonder!" cried Grenfell, exultantly, in answer to some question of his companion. "I have taken good care of that. I made sure first that it was the mail train, and that those documents were posted to-day, and would be on this particular train. They must never reach the solicitor's hands, or all will be up with me. The rails are torn up on the bridge. In the confusion we can enter the carriage and secure all the mail for Oakdale. There was no other way," cried the handsome villain, recklessly. "There is another reason that influences me," Grenfell went on, with a diabolical laugh. "I should not mind seeing that train a total wreck, for the man I hate above all others is on board—Harold Lexmore!" And he ground out the name from between his white teeth with a fierce imprecation. "We may as well take a stroll down the road. The mail train won't reach the bridge for an hour yet."

So saying, they walked leisurely away, leaving their listener, who crouched shivering among the alder bushes, fairly paralysed with horror.

Connie had caught their terrible meaning in a flash. Great Heaven! what should she do? They intended to wreck the train at the bridge—the train in which Harold Lexmore, the man she worshipped, was a passenger!

How long she stood there, in her dazed horror, the girl never knew; time seemed to slip by with the rapidity of lightning. The far-off shriek of the on-coming train aroused her as it sped on to its doom, nearing the fatal bridge.

CHAPTER XVII.

For a moment Constance Culver stood as if rooted to the spot, dazed with horror, and the face that was uplifted to the dim, flickering stars was pale as death itself.

The far-off shriek of the on-coming train aroused her as nothing else in the world could have done. Each instant it was tearing madly toward the bridge and to certain destruction, while the man she loved was wholly unconscious of his terrible danger.

In an instant Connie—brave, dauntless little Connie—had decided upon her course of action.

Quick as thought the girl dashed back to the bridge, which she had crossed scarcely an hour before. It was for life or death, and fear seemed to lend wings to her feet.

It was true—yes, horribly true. The iron rails had been torn from their fastenings, and the dark stream yawned below as if eager and expectant to swallow the prey that was to be given into its keeping if Heaven did not interfere.

With a terrible cry Connie sprang forward, throwing herself into the middle of the track and gesticulating wildly, as she waved her white handkerchief to and fro to warn the engineer of his great peril. The sound of her wild, agonised voice was lost, drowned in the roar and thunder of the on-coming train.

It was the most intensely thrilling moment of the girl's life. Would the engineer see her or hear her cries, or would the iron monster in its mad flight crush her, and carry its load of human beings on to the bridge and to death?

Connie stood upon the track with a death-white face and lips firmly set, trusting her young life blindly to Heaven.

The train had gained the curve scarcely a hundred yards ahead of her, and the head-light of the engine threw its bright glare on the white, agonised face and the slender slim figure standing directly in the track.

"Harold," murmured the girl, raising one white arm as if supplicating aid from above, "I will save you—oh, love of my heart, who are so cruelly lost to me, I will save your life to-night, or die in the attempt."

The eager, agonised prayer died on her heroic young lips. Already the white steam enveloped her like a misty shroud, the intense heat stifled

her, the terrible glare of the head-light dazed each faculty, the rails on either side of the brave, noble girl shook and trembled like an electric battery; but the girl never wavered, never flinched.

And in that awful moment of intense peril the engineer beheld her gesticulating so wildly, with hands aloft, waving her handkerchief as a signal of danger.

He saw and comprehended, but not an instant too soon. In vain he shouted hoarsely to the girl to save herself; she seemed rooted to the spot. Good Heavens! she would be crushed, mangled beneath the ponderous wheels.

Great drops of perspiration stood out in beads upon the man's face, and in that moment his presence of mind sided him.

He had done all that human power could do to stop the train, but it must pass several yards or more over the spot where the girl stood ere its speed would slacken.

With iron will and nerves of steel he sprang forward out upon the iron fender. A moment of breathless suspense followed; another moment and he had clutched the girl's upraised arm, and drew her by main force upon the railing beside him, and the great iron monster thundered pantingly over the spot where Constance had stood but an instant before—panted, trembled, and then stood still, scarcely three feet from the fatal bridge.

With a great hysterical cry Connie pointed to the bridge.

"The rails are torn up!" she gasped. "I meant to save your train—or—die!"

The brown eyes closed, and the girl fell back in the engineer's strong, stalwart arms in a dead faint; but the man realised at once the terrible import of her words, the terrible catastrophe she had averted at the risk of her own young life.

By the strange complications of fate, Harold Lexmore had missed that train, and had been obliged to continue his journey by a different route.

The passengers, fifty odd in number, to whom her bravery had been explained, overwhelmed Connie with thanks when she opened her eyes to consciousness. She was the heroine of the hour.

A purse would have been raised for her at once by the passengers; but this Connie firmly declined. Neither would she give her name; and as to her address, she said, with tears in her brown eyes,—

"I have no home. I was on my way to London to search for a situation to earn my own living."

A tall, portly, elegant-looking gentleman, the foremost among the crowd of passengers who had gathered around Connie, stepped quickly forward, proffering his card. Upon it she read the name,—

"EDWARD BINNIE."

"You have placed me, as well as my dear wife, who is in the rear carriage, under the greatest obligations, my dear young lady," he said. "If you will not accept money, and insist upon securing a situation, allow me to beg of you to accept a position in our home as companion to my wife—valued friend, if you will."

Connie was overwhelmed at Heaven's goodness to her.

Mrs. Binnie repeated her husband's request, and the grateful passengers urged her to accept, as she could do no better, although each one of them stood ready to render any assistance that lay in his power to the noble young girl who had saved their lives.

And thus it was that within one short hour the whole course of Connie's eventful life was turned into a different channel.

The guards on the train had set to work with a will, and the rails which would have been the cause of such a terrible wreck were quickly laid in place and firmly spiked down; and, with but half-an-hour's delay, the train thundered on in safety, speeding with the rapidity of lightning past the dumbfounded men hurrying along through the copsewood towards the bridge.

Imprecations loud and deep broke from George Grenfell's bloodless lips. A thunderbolt from a

clear sky could not have astonished the villain more than to see the train which he had planned to destroy dashing past him like a meteor.

How could it have happened? The planks and rails upon the bridge had been torn up, yet here was the train, and apparently in excellent condition.

To the last day of his life he could never solve that mystery.

"Folled!" he exclaimed, as the train thundered past him. Then, turning to his companion, he cried, under his breath, "I must fly from here this very night; for that train, which carries the mail to London, carries among the registered letters one to the solicitors, calling for my apprehension for forging the name of the late Major Lexmore to a certain document. Harold Lexmore, the son—curse him!—is pushing this affair through. After to-night this vicinity will be too hot for me."

Surely it was the cruellest fate in the world that caused him to make that decision. What came of it we shall soon see.

In the meantime, Connie was ensconced in Mrs. Binnie's section of the Pullman car. That lady sat opposite her in a crimson revolving chair, declaring herself by far too badly shaken up at the very thought of the thrilling accident they had so narrowly escaped to think of sleeping.

When Connie had given the lady her name, she was quite surprised to see her lean forward in her chair, with an eager expression on her face.

"Christie! Did you say your name was Miss Christie?" she cried, breathlessly. "Ah! I shall love you because your name is Christie. My dearest friend bore that name."

Again the lines of adverse fate crossed Connie's life. It would have been very easy to correct that mistake, which was to have such a tragic ending, then and there, by saying, "My name is not Christie, madame; it is Culver."

"What does it matter whether it is Culver or Christie they chose to call me!" Constance reasoned with herself.

If the lady so dearly loved the name of Christie, she might as well permit herself to be called by that name as any other, it mattered little to her.

"I am very glad to have found you, Miss Christie," she said, looking wistfully out of the window. "The great want, the great yearning need of my life is to have some one to talk to, someone who understands me."

And the face, which had struck Connie at first sight as a strangely unhappy one, was turned sadly away for an instant.

It was rather a strange remark, and the day came when Connie understood better what she meant by it.

"We have a very beautiful and pleasant home, but I live rather a retired, isolated life. I do not care much for society, although my husband is quite a favourite in it," continued the lady, flushing hotly as she again turned towards the window, her jewelled hands looking and unlooming themselves nervously together in her silken lap.

"I am not used to society myself," answered Connie, feeling that she was called upon to say something.

Of course it was only fancy, but it certainly appeared to Connie that the lady looked relieved.

During the remainder of the journey there was one thing that struck Connie quite forcibly; they saw very little of Mr. Binnie.

In her husband's presence Mrs. Binnie was strangely reticent. Husband and wife seldom addressed a remark to each other; yet Binnie was the very perfection of politeness in his elegant, polished manner and smooth diction; and the wife's wistful eyes rarely left his face when he was in her presence.

Connie was too young and inexperienced in the ways of the world to read aright these indications. Even palaces have their skeleton closets. Connie was soon to know, to her bitter cost, the skeleton that existed in the elegant mansion of the Binnies.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE home of the Binnies, in which Constance was soon domiciled, was indeed beautiful. The spacious grounds, the gray stone building, with its turrets and ivy-covered tower, reminded her painfully of Loxmore Hall.

The mansion was elegant in its appointments, yet few visitors were entertained there. This was rather remarkable, owing to their high social position.

Connie saw still less of the master of the house than she saw of him on the train. She often wondered why.

He never breakfasted with them; was rarely at home to luncheon, and the occasions were still rarer when he graced the table with his presence in the evening, and often, for days at a time, he would absent himself from home altogether.

When he was at home, Mrs. Binnie was fastidiously particular over her toilet. She generally chose a pale-blue silk, garnished with pink rosebuds.

This costume, above all others, was most trying to her complexion, but one had not the heart to tell her of it when she raised her troubled eyes and said, slowly,—

"My husband likes me best in pale blue; it is his favourite colour, this particular shade."

"Poor lady!" exclaimed Julia, her maid, to Constance, when they were quite alone. "Her husband will never know whether she has a blue gown or a pink one on; he never sees her when there's anything else in the room for his eyes to rest on."

Constance looked up from the lace-work she held in her hands, with grave surprise in her brown eyes.

"La!" cried Julia, "you've been Mrs. Binnie's companion nearly a month now, and you haven't guessed yet what makes her so unhappy. You're not very sharp, I should say, Miss Christie. I found it out the first day I came here."

"I do not know what you mean, Julia. I should never think of prying into people's troubles."

"Prying into!" repeated Julia, with a sneer and a toss of her auburn locks; "why, it's no more of a secret in this house than if it were patted up on every hoarding that Mr. Binnie and his wife don't get along well together. There's no fussing and quarrelling, to be sure; but then, goodness gracious knows if I had a husband I'd rather he would be fussing all the time than to give me such a freezing letting alone as he does her. Poor lady! I feel sorry for her, she tries so hard to keep him attracted."

This little conversation opened Constance's unsuspecting, innocent eyes to the true state of affairs.

That evening Mrs. Binnie was sitting alone in the moonlit window of her room, wistfully watching the main road. The beautiful white flowers she had put in her hair that morning were withered and dead, and her face showed traces of tears.

"I am glad you are come to keep me company, Miss Christie," she said. "I was feeling very lonely, sitting here watching for my husband."

A deep sigh accompanied the words.

"Lonely!" exclaimed Constance, gaily.

"Why, that ought not to be, my dear Mrs. Binnie. You ought to rouse yourself up, and if happiness will not find you out you ought to go in search of it."

"I fear it would be like Ponce De Leon's search for the fabled fountain of youth—I should never find it," murmured the lady. "My only happiness is in being where my husband is."

"Well," Constance returned, sweetly and consolingly, "you cannot expect a gentleman in your husband's position to have very much time to devote to home-life, no matter how much he may love that home."

"Do you really think that, Miss Christie!" exclaimed the poor lady, her pale face lighting up with an eager radiance that was seldom seen there; "do you really believe it is a sense of duty instead of inclination that keeps many a man away from his home?"

"In a great many cases, certainly," responded Constance, gently.

"You are very young but you are very sensible, Miss Christie," said the lady, clasping her companion's hands in her own cold, jewelled ones; "it is a great pleasure to talk to you, to hear your views; I draw great consolation from your words."

"I am very glad," was the earnest reply.

"Do you think that a husband can ever gain a higher sphere than that occupied by his wife? Do you think, putting it quite plainly, that a man lifted from obscurity and poverty can rise so far above the wife that he married while oppressed by poverty that she is unfitted for the position of his wife, sharer in his thoughts and joys when fame and prosperity have lifted him far above his fellow-men?"

The poor lady listened breathlessly for the answer to that question, as many a wife had done before her.

The answer fell clear and distinct, like balm from Connie's sweet lips.

"No husband can ever rise above the wife he has married, taken to his bosom to love and cherish, and protect through life, Mrs. Binnie. As he rises in the social scale she rises with him step by step."

"Thank you, Miss Christie, your words encourage me, they give me heart. I should like to confide in a secret to you; would you listen?"

And as she spoke a burning tear-drop fell from her long lashes upon the cool, white hand of Constance.

"I shall be very pleased to listen, Mrs. Binnie, anything that interests you to relate must interest me in listening to it."

"I can talk to you—you seem to understand me better than anyone else has ever done," responded the lady, gratefully. "It is my own story I am about to relate to you, Miss Christie, and a more tragic story never was written by the pen of a novelist; they make their romances end in these words: 'They married, and lived happily ever after'; but with marriage the tragedy of my life began."

The white hands that Connie held trembled, but with a firm voice, which quivered brokenly now and then, she went on, slowly:

"When I was your age I lived in Maryborough, I was a miller's daughter, as happy as the day was long. Did you ever read George Eliot's 'Mill on the Floss' if you did, you will have quite a faithful description of what my old home was like, the description suits it so well."

"I was as happy as a skylark, my song was as blithe as the ripple of the brooklet that gleefully escaped from the wheel of the mill! What do girls of seventeen know of the world and its cares?"

"I suppose they don't know very much, admitted Connie.

"They know nothing," responded Mrs. Binnie, "life's cruel lessons lie all before them—even at twenty."

"I was just seventeen—your age now—when my fate overtook me. It was on the sunniest of sunshiny mornings. I sat among the blue harebells, idly plucking them from their stems and tossing them into the stream, when suddenly glancing up, I saw the handsomest young man I had ever seen in all my life, standing just across the brook, looking at me with eyes full of admiration."

"I could feel my cheeks blushing burning hot, and my heart beat as it had never beaten before."

"Is your father in?" asked the stranger, lifting his hat. "You are the miller's daughter, I presume!"

"I could not tell you, Miss Christie what I said. I never knew. I must have answered in the affirmative, for stepping lightly and gracefully over the round, white stones lying in the bed of the brooklet, just above the water, he crossed over and stood by my side; but instead of going on to the mill to see my father, he lingered there talking to me."

"All young girls are easily impressed with a gay, handsome young fellow. His winking black eyes taught my girlish heart the sweet possibilities of love before we had been talking together an hour, and I was vaguely wondering if he would ever come again."

"He did come, upon one excuse or another, every day, and those halcyon days are like a dream to me now."

Again a burning tear fell upon Connie's cool, white hand; but the narrator continued, faintly:

"It might have been better perhaps had I never met the handsome stranger."

"Our wooing was sweet and romantic enough to please the heart of any young girl; but when he asked my father for my hand, there was sudden and terrible opposition."

"No, sir!" exclaimed my father, locking at Appa's white hands, 'you are not the husband I would choose for my girl. I can see now what you will learn in the after years. You are not suited to each other.'

"In what way, sir?" demanded Appa.

"Well, to be quite frank with you, you are to fastidious a young man to mate with my Lena," father replied, glancing at the fashionable cut of his clothes. "It seems to me a wife with more book-learning would suit you best. My girl knows more about the songs the birds sing in the trees yonder, the whispered words of the breeze among the flowers, than she does about grammar. Her lessons have all been learned from the book of nature. No, no, young man; she is suited for a miller's wife, or the wife of a farmer, but not for you."

"Love laughs at obstacles, and I am grieved to tell you that we eloped, and the true saying that 'runaway marriages never turn out well' was fully exemplified."

"When my father discovered what I had done, he simply said:

"I hope you may never rue it; but, ah, I fear for you!"

"Those words struck more terror to my heart than the deepest curses could have done."

"Yet in the first happy year of my marriage with Appa I quite forgot them, or remembered them only to laugh at my forebodings."

"Appa owned a general shop in a country village then, and we lived over the shop. And in those humble rooms, Miss Christie, I was a thousand times happier than I am now in this marble mansion."

"I fear my recital does not interest you," she said, anxiously.

"Pray go on, I am more than interested."

Constance little knew what vital interest the continuation of this story was to have for her.

CHAPTER XIX.

"For the first year everything went on smoothly enough with us," said Mrs. Binnie, continuing her strange recital. "Then for the first time I noticed that my Edward was growing discontented with the life we led."

"He was very ambitious. The one dream of his life was a longing for fame and glory. I could not understand this longing, and he often told me impatiently that 'we had not one thought in common,' and that if he had married any other wife—one who understood him better—he might have been a brilliant man."

"Then the crisis came. A distant relative died, and Edward as next-of-kin, inherited his vast wealth. From that moment I never knew a happy hour."

"We moved to London, and, with his great wealth, honour, fame, and all that his heart sighed for were soon his. But, alas! Miss Christie, each day but drifted his heart further from me."

"I was brought to a realization of it in a strange manner. I had sent for my sister Cora to make me a visit, to see my beautiful home. When Cora came I wanted Edward to take her out for a drive and show her the city, but to my great dismay he absolutely refused."

"Indeed I shall not be seen in public with an awkward country girl like that!" he exclaimed, angrily, when we were alone together. "It is bad enough to tolerate her about the house. Do you think a man of my standing can endure to be laughed at by having it leak out that she is my wife's sister? I wish to Heaven you would keep your country relations where they belong,

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and not bring them here to disgrace me. I abhor them!"

"Edward," I exclaimed, sharply, "you seem to forget that Cora is my sister!"

"She doesn't gain anything, in my opinion, by that!" he exclaimed in a voice of concentrated bitterness. "You two are as much alike, to use a common phrase, 'as two peas in a pod.'"

"Those words were a revelation regarding the opinion he held of me. And I, oh, God pity me, how I loved him! He was my world—the most perfect of men in my worshipful eyes.

"One's relatives are always quick to note the domestic infidelity between husband and wife.

"Sister Cora's sharp eyes soon detected the growing coldness between Edward and me.

"Pardon me, my dear," she said; "of course I may be mistaken, but he doesn't seem to care much about you. Here he goes to balls, operas, and parties every night, but he does not ask you to accompany him. Other men take their wives. What's the reason he doesn't take you?"

"That night I asked Edward about it. These things had not occurred to me before; my eyes were slowly opening.

"That sister of yours has been putting all these notions into your head," he retorted, angrily. "How dare she criticize my movements?"

"But why do you not take me out with you when you call upon your friends, or dine with them?" I persisted.

"I had rather not explain why," he said, evasively; but I insisted upon an answer.

"Well, then, if you must know, I may as well admit the truth. You are neither fitted by education nor culture to mingle in the society which my position calls upon me to enter. You would be out of place. You would be ignored instead of being appreciated. You could neither understand the conversation of those around you nor enter into it. Your position would be most trying for yourself and for me. You are not a society lady and you can never be one."

"You knew all this when you married me, Edward, you were pleased enough with me then," I cried.

"What would please Edward Binnie, a country merchant, would be far from pleasing the fastidious taste of a man of the world," he replied. "Your father was right, you and I were never suited to each other."

"From that night I was never the same, Miss Christie, I cried myself to sleep. Had Edward's love for me grown cold? Would it die altogether out of his heart? I asked myself. Ah, how I prayed Heaven to spare me his love—prayed as a starving, dying child prays for a crust of bread! Love is rapture, Miss Christie, and yet it is the keenest torture a woman's heart can know.

"When Cora went home I applied myself to study; but it was a hopeless task; try as I would, I could not retain in my memory what I did learn. I tried music, but I seemed to have lost the power to play; the notes seemed to my nervous, excited fancy like little black sheep jumping over the bars.

"It never occurred to me before that I was no conversationalist. I realized it now with a pain at my heart that was terrible to endure. I could not converse with any one when Edward was by; my thoughts grew muddled and confused, and my lips grew mute, for I knew that he was noting all my imperfections. I lived in constant dread that was agony itself lest I should do or say something wrong.

"Each day the breach between Edward and myself widened, and the full force of the words I should have heeded ere it was too late often recurs to me—'We are not suited to each other.' I try to look my best before Edward, but it is quite useless," continued the poor lady. "He is dissatisfied with me. Hope has died out of my heart. Your words, that 'husbands can never rise above their wives in the social scale,' has given me great hope, Miss Christie. I thank you for them. I shall dream over them to-night. This exchange of confidences with you has comforted me strangely."

Constance was kneeling beside her, her lovely, sympathizing face upturned to the one bending over her in infinite pity.

"Do not allow yourself to grieve over such a gloomy picture," she cried. "You and I must change all that. By three months you shall have your Edward again at your feet suing for your love, as in those bright, halcyon days."

The radiance that lighted up the haggard face for an instant was pitiful to see; but it died out in a single instant, leaving it more haggard than before. She shook her head sadly;

"Love that has once died out of the heart can never be rekindled," I have read; and I believe that that is quite true, Miss Christie."

"Love for you has not died out of Mr. Binnie's heart," declared Connie. "The old affection is only sleeping; we must arouse it."

The lady looked incredulous, scarcely daring to hope.

"You cannot be much older than I am," continued Connie. "You are still young and beautiful. You are despondent, that is all."

"I am twenty-seven," said Mrs. Binnie ruefully; "and my age shows to great disadvantage when compared to the fresh young face of a girl of seventeen."

"Nay," cried Constance, gaily, "many ladies do not fall in love and marry until they are that age. Twenty-seven is young, indeed; you will admit that when you are forty."

"What a wise head you have on such young shoulders, my dear," laughed Mrs. Binnie. "I believe I am regaining my lost youth again under the witching spell of your presence. I have something to say to you about yourself," she went on, patting the girl's soft brown curls. "My husband has a nephew who is coming here to spend a few days with us ere he goes abroad. His father died recently. You must see him, my dear, and help me to entertain him. He is very brilliant, and I hope sincerely that it will end in a marriage. I should like very much to keep you in the family."

Constance had risen to her feet, her beautiful face death-white in the solemn moonlight.

"I am not for love or for marriage, Mrs. Binnie," she said, brokenly. "I pray you never to speak to me of it again—I could not see your nephew—I would rather not—please do not ask me."

That night when Constance went to her room, long and earnestly Mrs. Binnie mused over her strange words—"Not for love or for marriage." What could the girl possibly mean?

"She would make such a good wife for my husband's nephew, handsome Harold Lexmore," she mused; "but, of course, if she refuses to see him when he comes, I cannot insist upon her doing so; and he comes to-morrow, his telegram says: I am sure he would fall in love with her pretty face if he were to see her."

(To be continued.)

RECENT experiments have demonstrated the fact that a piece of glass may be made iridescent by flooding with a dilute solution of silicate of soda, and allowing it to dry spontaneously in an upright position. Washing the plate in running water and again drying may bring out the colours more brilliantly, while blackening the back of the glass will render them gorgeous. The film adheres tenaciously, and can scarcely be removed except by etching.

If good wine needs no bush it would appear superfluous to recommend goods so well known and generally used as the toilet requisites manufactured by Messrs. Calvert and Co., of Manchester. Yet there may be among our readers some who have not made the acquaintance of the goods of this firm, and to such we would say give them a trial. At this time of the year their Prickly Heat Soap will be found invaluable in allaying skin irritation; and their Carbolic Tooth Powder and Carbolic Ointment are excellent in their way. Messrs. Calvert have devoted a lifetime to the study of how to adapt for general use carbolic acid, and have succeeded so well that their proprietary articles have now a world-wide reputation, as is testified by the number of awards they have received.

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Stains Grey Hair, Whiskers, Eyebrows any shade desired. Does not stain the Skin. Is applied in a few minutes. It is Harmless, Washable, Lasting, and Restores the Colour to the Root, making detection impossible, and undoubtedly the Cleanest and Best Hair Stain in the World. No. 1, Light Brown; No. 2, Golden; No. 3, Dark Brown; No. 4, Black. Sent secretly packed, by post, 1s. 3d., 2s. 3d., 3s. 3d., 4s., and 10s.

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A Nickel Silver Pocket Pen and Pencil, with your Name in full, ready inked for use. Sent post-free for 6d. Any two-lettered monogram, in fancy Locket, ditto. Every description of Stamps made to order. Specimens post-free. AGENTS WANTED.

A. BROOKMAN, 11, HAND COURT, HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C. Est. 1855.

FACETIÆ.

JONSON: "Had you any luck on your holiday trip?" TOMSON: "Great luck! The baby cut four teeth while I was away."

FIRST ACTOR: "Many a time my poor old father implored me not to become an actor." SECOND ACTOR: "Don't worry, old man—you didn't."

"THERE is one thing about me; I am not afraid to say just what I think." "Of course you are not afraid, but you ought to be ashamed."

"SOME men will go to almost any length for the sake of being eccentric." "Yes, indeed; there's Browning, for instance." "What's his freak?" "Won't ride a bike."

DAUGHTER: "George says he fears he can't support me in the style I'm accustomed to." FATHER: "Marry him, anyhow. I can't keep it up much longer myself."

OLD MAID (who wants a portrait of her dog): "Do you take instantaneous photographs here?" PHOTOGRAPHER'S BOY: "Yes, ma'am; run right in, and he'll take you afore you're a minute older."

FIRST PASSENGER: "Would you—ah—lend me your spectacles a moment, please?" SECOND PASSENGER: "Certainly, sir." FIRST PASSENGER: "Ah, thank you. Now, as you cannot see to read your paper, would you mind letting me have it too I please?"

"It must have been a very tender-hearted butcher who killed this lamb," said the Cheerful Idiot, pausing in the sawing of his chop. "Why?" kindly asked the oldest boarder. "He must have hesitated three or four years before striking the fatal blow."

DAUGHTER: "Don't be angry, papa, because this young man is going to marry me and take me away from you." FATHER: "Angry, my darling? Never! But I'll never forgive him if he ever does anything that causes you to come back to me again!"

"DESCRIBE briefly the way a woman gets off a street car," said the superintendent to the applicant for a position as conductor. "The wrong way," was the answer. "Correct," said the superintendent, and the applicant was straightway engaged.

"FATHER: "It has pained me to punish you, Paul. Remember that the wickedness of the son makes the grey hair of the parent!" BOY: "Boo-hoo! What a bad boy you must have been! Look at your poor grandad over there with his snow white hair—boo-hoo!"

THERE had been an addition to the family, and little Freddy was taken by his father to see the little stranger. "Why, he's got no teeth!" he exclaimed in astonishment, "nor no hair either!" After a moment's silence, he said: "You've been taken in, dad, he's an old un!"

"I MAY be over-careful," she said, as she hid he plated spoons and curling irons in the bottom of her trunk before she went out shopping, "but I just can't bear to run any risks." Then she pinned her gold watch to the outside of her dress by a blue ribbon, and went down town.

CHUMLEY: "That hypnotist is a fraud. He couldn't control my mind at all last night." POKELY: "Of course he had some excuse!" CHUMLEY: "Yes. He said there was no material to work on. You ought to have heard the audience give him the laugh."

"It was careless," mused the advertising manager, in a melancholy tone. "To what do you refer?" "The manner in which they put that prima-donna's puff of our cure for a cold on the same page with the announcement that she has a sore throat and cannot sing."

THE militiaman was undergoing an examination for non-commissioned officer. "What do Army regulations make the first requisite in order that a man may be buried with military honours?" was the question fired at him. "Death!" he promptly responded. And after mature reflection the examining committee held that he was right.

HE: "Do you believe in long engagements?" SHE: "Well, it all depends." HE: "I don't understand." SHE: "If he has plenty of money and is inclined to be liberal, a long engagement is the thing; but if he cannot afford boxes at the opera and such things I always make his regime very short."

SOMEBODY told me that that young man who was just introduced to us is an actor," remarked Maud. "No," replied Mamie, positively; "I'm sure he is not." "He looks like one." "I don't care. He isn't." "How do you know?" "We were talking about the stage, and he named as many as five or six people whose acting her admired."

WIFE (time midnight): "Hark! Husband! Wake up! I hear the rustling of silk and the clank of chains." Husband: "You do! Horrors! Then the reports are true. I was told this house was haunted." Wife (much relieved): "Oh, is that all! I was afraid Fido had broken loose and was tearing my new ball dress."

"Yes," said Mr. Smitherkins, as he leaned back from the desert at the dinner-table, "they do say that a woman's work is never done." "And that is just where they're right," said Mrs. S. promptly, "and I am glad to say that you are beginning to realise what a time I have. What made you think of it?" "That ple!" returned Smitherkins, quietly.

A GENTLEMAN, detained at a country railway station one bitterly cold night, went into the waiting-room, where a cheerful fire was burning. He lit a cigar to beguile the tedium of waiting. Just then a porter entered, and the gentleman remarked, pointing to the legend above the mantelpiece, "Smoking Strictly Prohibited." "I suppose that rule is not rigidly enforced?" "Oh, no, sir," said the porter, meaningly; "neither is the one underneath, "indicating another which read, "Railway servants are not allowed to receive gratuities." He got one.

BREAKLEIGH: "Good-bye, Miss Convent; I've enjoyed chatting with you so much. As a rule I can never talk to young girls." She (visibly pleased): "Why, do you generally find them too stupid?" He: "Oh, no! On the contrary, they are generally too intellectual." (And he wondered why her expression changed suddenly.)

IN vain he sought in the crowded car to stoop down to get his handkerchief that had fallen to the floor. The new woman thought he was trying to push her to one side to secure more room. "Sir," said she, frigidly and with austerity, "I stand upon my rights." "Beg pardon, mum," said the red-nosed gentleman; "you're standin' on th' gen'tman's hankercher." And the car passed on.

"THE fact that I was a good musician," said the lady from Johnstown, "was the means of saving my life during the flood in our town a few years ago." "How was that?" asked the young lady who sang. "When the water struck our house, my husband got on the folding-bed and floated down the stream until he was rescued." "And what did you do?" "Well, I accompanied him upon the piano."

IN the North of England a cold ham is considered the only respectable *pièce de résistance* of a "funeral" tea. Friends and relations are always "put away" with 'em. A dying Yorkshireman was visited by the doctor, who informed the weeping spouse that her husband's hours on earth were numbered, and that she could give him anything in the way of food he fancied or craved for. "Is there aught you fancy, loove?" she asked him. "Nay, wuman," he said feebly. "Ah cannot bite aught." Suddenly his dim eyes caught sight of a freshly-cooked ham reposing on "t' best dish," embellished with pink and white paper. "Ee, Ah could like a slice o' yon 'am," he whispered eagerly. "Nay, mon, Ah cannot coot into thot!" she cried, "It's for t' funeral, lad."

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Unequaled as a Remedy for Skin Ailments, Piles, Throat Colds, Neuralgia and Rheumatic Pains, Stings, Eczema, Cuts, Sores, Burns, &c.—Large Pots, 12s. each.

CARBOLIC TOOTH POWDER AND TOOTH PASTE.

Have the largest sale of any Dentifrices, most effective for preserving the Teeth and strengthening the Gums. Useful to prevent infection, by inhalation.—6d., 1s., and 1s. 6d. Tins; 6d., 1s., and 1s. 6d. Pots.

CARBOLIC TOILET SOAP AND PRICKLY HEAT SOAP.

Pure Antiseptic Soaps for the Skin and Complexion, and help to prevent contagion. After cycling and other out-door exercise they are especially beneficial. 1s. 6d. 3-Tablet Boxes; 6d. and 1s. Bars.

PREVENT FEVERS BY USING CALVERT'S CARBOLIC POWDER

to destroy all noxious or infectious odours from Closets or offensive refuse.

The Powder is guaranteed to contain 15 per cent. of Calvert's No. 5 Carbolic—the STRONGEST Disinfectant known—and is sold in 6d., 1s. and 1s. 6d. Dredgers.

Can be obtained at most Chemists, Stores, &c., or 1s. worth and upwards post free for value.

BUYERS ARE WARNED against inferior imitations, which are numerous.
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AWARDED 76 GOLD AND SILVER MEDALS AND DIPLOMAS.

SOCIETY.

THE Emperor of Germany has given up his projected visit to Cowes during the regatta week, and will not be seen in England this year.

THE Queen will reside at Windsor Castle until the middle of this month when she is going to Osborne for her usual summer visit to the Isle of Wight, and on Friday, August 20th, her Majesty will proceed to Balmoral for the autumn.

THE Queen still wears the style of shoes of thirty years ago. Her children still address her in the way which was fashionable when they were little things. No member of the upper classes ever said "Mother" then. And from the eldest to the youngest they still call the Queen "Mamma."

THE Duke and Duchess of Coburg are to reside at Clarence House until about the 16th inst., when they will proceed to the Chateau of Reinhardbrunn, their seat in the Thuringian Forest, for the shooting season. The Prince of Wales will probably spend a couple of days at Reinhardbrunn at the end of August, in order that he may shoot in the surrounding forest, which contains vast herds of deer of great size and quality.

THE engagement of the young Queen of the Netherlands to her cousin, Prince Bernard, will not be made public for some time to come, probably not until Prince Bernard comes of age next year. Queen Wilhelmina is not quite seventeen years old, and Prince Bernard is under twenty. The Dutch people regard the engagement with much favour.

It is understood at Copenhagen that the Empress Dowager of Russia, the Princess of Wales, and the Duchess of Cumberland will all arrive at Fredensborg at the beginning of August, and that they are to stay in Denmark for at least two months. It is probable that the Princess of Wales will proceed to Copenhagen in the Royal yacht *Osborne* directly after the Cowes regatta week, accompanied by Princess Victoria and Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark, while the Prince of Wales will join them at Fredensborg after the usual visit to Homburg.

IN France the wish is gallantly expressed that Queen Victoria, after reigning longer than George III., may go on and beat the record of Louis XIV., who was a King for seventy-two years. This would land Her Majesty well into the next century, and enable her to celebrate her ninetieth birthday in 1909, with the Prince of Wales at sixty-eight, his illustrious consort at sixty-five, the Duke of York at forty-four, the Duchess at forty-two and Prince Edward at sixteen.

PRINCESS VICTORIA ALEXANDRA ALICE MARY OF YORK has made the acquaintance of her illustrious great-grandmother, of whose Jubilee she is so delightful a souvenir to her parents. The little maiden has been singularly fortunate both in the time of her advent and in the names that have been bestowed upon her, since they are all names which have dear associations for the people. She is, it is true, the twelfth member of the Royal Family whose first name is Victoria, but she will be the Victoria of the family, as she is associated with one of the greatest events in the Queen's life; Victoria, too, is her mother's name, and it is borne by the Queen's eldest daughter, a daughter of the Prince of Wales, and now by the eldest daughter of our future King, the present Duke of York. Alexandra is, of course, the name of one grandmother, our beloved Princess of Wales. Alice is a name almost sacred in the Royal family, and especially dear to the Queen; and Mary, which is associated with it, is borne by the popular Duchess of Teck, the other grandmother of the Royal infant, as well as by the Duchess of York.

This singular name of Tatiana has been chosen, it is said, for the infant Grand Duchess. Tatiana would seem to be the feminine of Tatian, and Tatian was a Syrian who lived in the second century, and wrote a Harmony of the Four Gospels.

STATISTICS.

THE entire coast line of the globe is about one hundred and thirty-six thousand miles.

IN LONDON, out of one hundred widowers who marry again, twelve marry their house-keepers.

DURING the last 2,000 years Britain has been invaded by foes from over the sea no fewer than forty-eight times.

THE most extensive cemetery in the world is that of Rome, in which over six million human beings have been interred.

THE highest masts of sailing vessels are from one hundred and sixty to one hundred and eighty feet high, and spread from sixty thousand to one hundred thousand square feet of canvas.

GEMS.

BUFFOONERY is the corruption of wit, as knavery is the corruption of knowledge.

To level and confound the different orders of mankind is far from producing an equality among them; it is in truth the most unequal thing imaginable.

ALWAYS man needs woman for his friend. He needs her clearer vision, her subtler insight, her softer thought, her winged soul, her pure and tender heart. Always woman needs man to be her friend. She needs the vigour of his purpose, the ardour of his will, his calmer judgment, his braver force of action, his reverence and his devotion.

EXPERIENCE shows that to know and to do are seldom so closely connected as we might wish. Take any set of people who listen constantly to the same moral teachings, and the wide difference in their conduct under similar temptations will show clearly that some other element beside knowledge must be at work shaping the actions.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BARLEY WITH PRUNES.—Have on hand one-half pound of prunes, soaked in water over night. Boil in water a cup of barley two or three hours, keeping it wet enough not to burn, then add the prunes with the water they were soaked in, allowing to cook until soft. Be careful not to break in stirring. Add a little butter and salt.

INVALID CHOPS.—Take a loin chop, free it from bone, skin and fat, mince it very finely, add a little salt and pepper, and form it into a compact flat cake. Flour this thickly, and fry till a good brown on both sides. Put into a small pan half a gill of strong beef-tea, and when it just begins to boil place in it the cake of meat; let it cook for a quarter of an hour, turning it over occasionally by passing a knife under it. Take care that it does not boil. Scatter chopped parsley over, and serve.

SARATOGA CHIPS.—Bake potatoes and slice them into the thin slabs required for the chip. To do this a patent cutter should be employed. The cutter employed for cabbage-slaw would make the work ten times quicker. Make a strong solution of brine, lay the chips in this and let them remain ten or fifteen minutes. This process serves to harden them. Afterwards take them out and press them dry, placing them upon a strip of cloth to drain. The biggest and shallowest kettle in the kitchen will be the next requirement. Place it upon the stove and half fill it with lard. Let the lard come slowly to a boil. But do not put in the chips until the boiling point has been well reached. Then put in the potatoes. When they have reached a delicate shade of brown they are done. They may then be dipped out by a skimming instrument and laid upon a cloth until they are thoroughly dry.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It is said that the working people in Ireland, who live chiefly on the potato, never suffer from gout.

A CLOCK in St. Petersburg has ninety-five faces, indicating simultaneously the time at thirty different spots on the earth's surface, besides the movements of the earth and planets.

THE largest building stones are those used in the cyclopean walls of Baalbec, in Syria. Some of these measure 63 ft. in length by 28 ft. in breadth, and are of unknown depth.

THE orange and the lemon are both said to be fatal to the cholera bacillus. Placed in contact with the cut surface of the fruit, the bacilli survive but a few hours.

IN Sweden, if you address the poorest person in the street you must lift your hat. The same courtesy is insisted upon if you pass a lady on the stairway. To enter a reading-room or a bank with one's hat on is regarded as impolite.

IN the Hawaiian Islands, where pumpkins and other like plants have been introduced, and where they have no bees or other insects of that kind to do all the flower fertilizing, it is done by the natives. These plants were found to flower profusely, though bearing no fruit, and when they finally solved the mystery they found it necessary to carry by hand the pollen from one plant to the pistils of another.

AMONG the improvements in tyres are those with coiled wire springs, surrounded with sections of cork. The idea of a cork tyre is not new, neither does it seem practical for long distance or hard riding. For near-by trips and perfectly-smooth roads they might work all right, but the cross-country rider who takes wheel-track and foot-path, as the case may be, coming in contact with broken stone, gravel, concrete and what-not, they appear somewhat faulty in the way of durability. The sharp edge of a stone will take a piece from cork as quickly as a knife, and a few long trips would make short work of one of these tyres if much bad road were encountered. Take it all in all, it is likely that a good rubber tyre will be found the cheapest and best in the long run.

It is a comparatively new idea to put up tombstones and monuments of glass, instead of marble or granite, but it is a practical one and likely to meet with great encouragement from those who desire these memorials to be lasting. Glass resists the elements and is to all intents and purposes indestructible. Stone of all sorts crumbles and disintegrates under the action of the elements. But glass remains and will endure for centuries. It is, therefore, proposed that all memorial tablets, monuments, and headstones be made of glass. Any colour may be selected, pure white, of course, having the first choice. Lettering may be put on in any style, and any device or pattern may be used. It has long been understood that for marine purposes thick plate glass is the only practical and appropriate material, resisting storms and seas as no other substance can.

MANY persons experience great fatigue in working and reading by artificial light. Some attention has been given to this subject, especially in view of reading and study, and the type, paper and illumination most favourable to comfort and health. White light is recommended for all artificial illumination. One should never read at a lower degree of light than ordinary daylight. Very low intensities cause eyestrain and weakness, which may result in exceedingly severe and even dangerous mental and physical conditions. It is now an established fact that epilepsy is sometimes caused by eye-strain. There are also many other maladies that are primarily caused and greatly aggravated by bad light while using the eyes. Some authorities recommend white paper; others, notably experienced journalists, insist black that straw-coloured paper and ink are less taxing to the eyes than white paper. The very small type used by a great many printers is responsible for a great deal of eye trouble. Type should be loaded, and letters of larger size ought to be the rule.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. K.—We do not answer questions on card-playing.
ERIC.—We could not give even the remotest estimate.
ESTHER.—The prices vary greatly in different localities.
TRIM.—Natural death never occurs through the cause you mention.
ALMA.—Copyright cannot be obtained except for original work.
V. V.—Any news company should be able to procure it for you.
QUEST.—You cannot legally make, for private use, any patented article.
S. L.—The mother and the brothers and sisters take equal shares.
EDMOND.—It is unusual for a vicar so to act, but we think he is within his rights.
B. S.—Only a lawyer can give an estimate of the cost of divorce proceedings.
B. R.—A letter addressed to the person named, London, England, will reach its destination.
HAGHER.—We can only counsel patience; the people you are dealing with never hurry.
RITA.—The girl can leave school when she is thirteen if she has passed the fourth standard.
C. M.—We would advise you to consult some well-known physician, who is a specialist in dermatology.
OLD READER.—You can by inquiry at the divorce registry learn what must be done, and save the charges.
D. C.—Our strong advice is to engage the services to a solicitor.
CONSTANT READER.—If you mean used English postage stamps you would have to collect a million to realise £2.
ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Holbein was a great German artist, and if your picture is genuine it is very valuable.
AMBITIOUS.—Stability is the great secret of success. No man can prosper who is a mechanic one day, a professional man the next, and nothing the next day.
S. F.—We know of nothing to answer so well as a careful rubbing over with fresh milk, using a piece of soft, clean flannel.
LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—There are many equally good for the purpose, and some of the metropolitan papers also cover the area you specify.
FRAGMENT.—Get vaccination done at once, then send certificate to registrar, and there will be no more about it; but do not delay longer.
INCREPACIOUS.—It is true that the waters of the Dead Sea are so intensely salt that the human body floats like a cork in them.
SLAVEY.—Your employer has no legal right to require you to attend church as a condition precedent to your being supplied with a Sunday dinner.
ANNOYER.—Probably it has been kept in an unsuitable place. Cannot say what is the matter with it; you had better take it to the maker of such things.
DOUBTFUL.—The process is thorough, because it burns out the hair root; the pain is slight, and the operation is in the hands of a skilful operator not at all dangerous.
ELVINE.—Only one marble statue of the human figure with eyelashes is known. It is one of the gems of the Vatican, the Sleeping Ariadne, and was found in 1503.
TEEDY.—Let balance alone until you are much older. If you cannot let it alone altogether, no matter what your present or future weight may be.
NORA.—A little attention to diet may be well, as dyspepsia sometimes produces giddiness and brain pressure and might have an influence in dulling the brain faculties.
G. W.—The heir to the Norfolk estates was born on 7th September, 1879; after him the next to succeed would be the brother to the present Duke, who is a major in the Prince of Wales Hussars.
IN DOUBT.—Your age should render you clear-sighted enough to form your own conclusions in respect to the particular matter submitted to our consideration. We wish you well, however, under all circumstances.
ANITA.—The English language was borrowed from Latin both directly and through Norman-French. Its principal source is Anglo-Saxon, which belongs to the same group of languages as modern German.
MARION.—Whiting is the foundation of most silver polishes, and is cheaper than any of the preparations sold. It may be moistened with water or with ammonia for use. The ammonia gives a more brilliant polish to the silver.
F. A. E.—No length of absence of the husband authorises another marriage without the wife having obtained a divorce; but if, not having heard of her husband for seven years, the woman marries, she cannot be prosecuted for bigamy.
X. Y.—A "found" postal order is the property of the Postmaster-General, just as a "found" cheque belongs in the first place to the man who issued it; you should at once have handed it over to superintending postmaster with your name and address.

LILY.—Powdered borax strewn liberally about the floors where they frequent and into cracks and crevices where they hide, and steadily persevered in, will get rid of them in time; otherwise you must resort to the ordinary traps.
HARSHED.—Such little slips of memory often occur, and need cause no uneasiness unless they come too often, or last too long. Sometimes all that is necessary is to close the eyes and rest for a moment when all will come clear again.
CONSTANT READER.—Unless you have good reason for believing they are dead, you must go on paying alimony to the mother, taking her word for it that they are alive and well; a little inquiry and observation should discover their whereabouts and condition to you.
WORRIED.—The only way to remove tattoo marks is to remove the skin itself; it has been stated that it is possible to get rid of them by tattooing cream into the marks which cause the ink to rise to the surface; you might try this if you like.
GERALD.—There are many appliances used in making picture frames which are not sold in the shops; those you require are a mitre box and a shoot board, both of which must be made for you by a cabinet-maker or joiner; then you need a saw and clamps.
L. M. C.—If her parents and friends have no good reason for such watchfulness it is unusual and unwise; but a mother is always to be trusted in such a matter. Our own knowledge of the case is insufficient to justify us in offering a suggestion.
SEN ROMA.—We can hardly advise until you say whether the lad is earning wages more than sufficient to maintain himself; but a ready way out of the difficulty is to make application for parochial relief, and leave your inspector to deal with sons.

IF I HAD KNOWN.

If I had known in the morning,
How wearily all the day,
The words unkind,
Would trouble my mind,
That I said ere you went away;
I had been more patient, darling!
Nor given you needless pain;
But we vex our own,
With look and tone
We may never take back again!

For though in the quiet evening,
You may give me the kiss of peace;
Yet it might be,
That never for me,
This pain in my heart should cease!
We have careful thoughts for the stranger,
And smiles for the sometime guest;
But off for our own,
The bitter tone,
Though we love our own the best!

So now in the quiet morning,
And the peaceful hour of eve,
It may not be,
For you and for me,
To think of one word to grieve!
And though we neglect not the stranger,
Nor heed of the honoured guest,
We keep for our own,
The sweetest tone,
Since we love our own the best!

ALWYN.—It is very difficult to get a position in a public library unless you are acquainted with some one who is interested there. You might apply to any of the libraries and ask to be considered whenever there is a vacancy. But you would probably find it rather discouraging business to wait such a length of time.
U. S.—Evidently it was not properly dissolved or mixed before moulding. You do not give the composition. We are therefore uncertain what to recommend. You might, however, try dissolving it in a vessel standing in hot water, keep up the heat of the hot water surrounding the vessel, and when thoroughly dissolved mix well and remould.
DEPRESSION.—Everybody has a chance in this world, and what it amounts to depends very largely upon the individual himself; if you choose to aim at something high, and labour for it patiently, never allowing any temporary disappointment to divert you from your object, then it is almost certain you will attain it at last.
ROSEY.—First put a bit of brown paper over the grease spot, then lay a very hot iron on that, and the greater part of the stain should be absorbed into the paper; repeat the application until the paper comes away clean, then taken your blacklead polishing brush, knock all dust out of it, and give the place where the stain was a good firm rub; that completes the cure; the lead does not give off a stain.
EMMA.—Take equal quantities of spirits of wine and warm water, sponge the satin on the right side with this, working down the material, and not across it. While still damp, iron on the wrong side. Another plan, which has been well recommended, is to scour the satin with the following mixture: Four ounces each of honey and soft soap, mixed with an egg and a wingful of gin. Apply with a stiff brush. When the satin appears clean, rinse in cold water, press between clean cloths to dry, or hang up to drain. Iron while still damp, and dry before folding.

DOUBTFUL.—Hydrofluoric acid, used to remove the "green" from stones long exposed to damp, would certainly make short work of your plaster stains; but it is a ticklish stuff to work with, and we advise you to let your local chemist explain its properties before you apply it.
CIVIL.—After you have learned what you can, your best course is to take a part of the money you have saved and start a small paper in a country town. This will be about as much of a struggle as you will be able to manage for a few years. Afterward you may try larger ventures, but at first it is much better to go very slowly and not risk too much.
LEONARD.—The height of the Gibraltar Rock is over 1,400 feet, and this stupendous precipice is pierced by miles of galleries in the solid rock, stone porches for cannon being placed at frequent intervals. From the water batteries to a distance of two-thirds up the rock, one tier after another of cannon is presented to the enemy. A garrison of from 5,000 to 10,000 is maintained, with provisions and ammunition for a six months' siege.
WORRIED MOTHER.—It will be necessary in the first place to get the neglected child's hair cut short, then wash with carbolic soap, and comb, next day wash with a little acetic acid in water, and comb again; it is necessary to repeat these combings, but every day lessens the need of it; then, as a final protection get twopenny worth of quassia chips from a chemist and put it in a quart bottle of warm water to stand overnight; every day before sending child to school brush the hair with that and you may hope to keep her clean.
BIDDY.—Six pounds rhubarb, four pounds preserving sugar, half pound ginger (whole), young tender rhubarb is best; wash the rhubarb clean but do not peel it, cut it in inch lengths and put it in a basin with the ginger and cover over with the sugar, let it stand for twenty-four hours, pour all the syrup into a preserving pan with the pieces of ginger and boil quickly for ten minutes, now add the rhubarb, bring to the boil, and boil very gently a quarter of an hour, pick out the ginger and dish in jars.
JOCK.—The Scots who came through Ireland to Scotland were the progenitors of the Scottish Highlanders; the Celts of Wales are the descendants of the ancient Britons; it is asserted, without proof, that a remnant of the Britons from lowland Scotland fought their way through the intervening Saxon armies to Wales and joined the Britons there, but it is far more likely that those original inhabitants were gradually absorbed into the ranks of the Picts and Scots, and more largely into the Saxons in North of England and South of Scotland.
A. G.—A little more practice may enable you to be as successful in one as in the other. Nor should you be despondent because your first effort has not proved a hit. The second may. The world is full of instances of non-success at first trials in every sphere of labor, literary or otherwise. There have been very few who wish one bound found themselves in the path of fame and fortune; and even when a first effort has been crowned with triumph, bitter disappointment has followed in its wake as no subsequent work could be made to equal the first.
YOUNG HOUSEWIFE.—Immediately upon leaving the sleeping room in the morning the windows should be raised full height, and the doors thrown open to enable the fresh outside air to reach every corner of the apartment in free circulation. There is marvellous power in the air to sweeten and to purify. Very thoughtful people, who like things absolutely fresh and pure, are careful to turn back the bedclothing in such a way that the air can touch every part which has been in contact with the sleeper. Or, better still, the bedclothing is taken from the bed and spread upon chairs near the open window.
ESTIE.—Half pound of paste, quarter pound sugar, quarter pound butter, four eggs, jam, almond essence; make half pound of paste, roll it out half an inch thick, and with this cover a fat dish; wet the edges, and having rolled out what remains of the paste, put a border of paste about an inch wide all round; ornament it very nicely, brush the edge with water, and shake some sugar over; put a layer of jam (plum is best) on the dish, quarter of an inch thick; then above that pour the following mixture:—Put four yolks and one white of egg, add to that the sugar, and beat well; add the butter, very slightly melted, and a little almond flavouring; beat all together for five minutes at least, pour on the top of the jam, dust a little sugar over, and bake in a very quiet oven for one hour; if necessary, cover with a buttered paper the edge of the pudding to prevent it being overdone.

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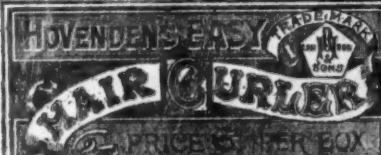
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